

SPEECHES

OF THE LATE „

Right Honourable:

RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN.

(SEVERAL CORRECTED BY HIMSELF.)

EDITED BY

(DN)
 **CONSTITUTIONAL FRIEND.**

VOL. III.

London :

**PRINTED FOR PATRICK MARTIN, CORNER OF ORCHARD-
STREET, OXFORD-STREET.**

1816.

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SPEECHES

OF THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN.

APRIL 5.

ROYAL BURGHS IN SCOTLAND.

MR. SHERIDAN said, that on the part of those who had for their object the internal regulation of the royal burghs in Scotland, every thing had been done to entitle them to have an inquiry made into the subject. They had made out all the allegations of their petition, and they were now before the house. On a former occasion the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Dundas) had called on him to specify his complaint, and then said, he could not go into it at that time—wished that it should not be pursued in that session. To this he assented, and oral and written evidence was afterwards collected to satisfy the scruples of the right honorable gentleman. He had the evidence now ready. The gentlemen on the other side had had their time to send to Scotland, to the proper officers, for any documents they might think fit, for the support of what they might maintain to be the proper defence of the rights belonging to these royal burghs; and

the question now was, whether the allegations of the petitions he had presented, complaining of abuses in these royal burghs, were true or false. He asserted that abuses, such as had been complained of, did exist. The right honorable gentleman denied that—there they were at issue; and that was the fact which he wished to have decided—that was the object which he should have in the proposition which he should make; for which purpose he should move for a committee to inquire into it. He should prefer a committee of the whole house; but that he would not have any dispute, he should refer it, if the right honorable gentleman wished it, to a select committee; but as he could not see what objection could be made to either, he should move, “That on Tuesday, the 17th instant, this house will resolve itself into a committee of the whole house, to take into consideration the matter of the petition, and other papers presented to this house last session of parliament, relative to the royal boroughs of Scotland.”

Mr. Dundas opposed the motion.

Mr. Sheridan might have been astonished at this mode of objecting to his propositions, one after another regularly, as he made them, did he not know the principal on which* they were founded, and the reason for them. The truth was, that they shunned the enquiry, and wished to evade it by any means they could devise; any thing but a fair and candid contest of the point in issue he expected; but he would promise gentlemen on the other side, they should not get over the business in that way. As to the time being too far advanced in the session, and the idea that business of importance was chiefly over, he must observe, in the first place, that it was not in his power, without manifest inconvenience, to have brought on this subject in February, as the right honorable gentleman had hinted, ought to have been done; he was obliged to attend to other objects,

which it was not for the house to hear; and the more particularly so when they recollected, that whenever the subject came forward, it was always in the mind of the right honorable gentleman either too late or too early. As to the other point, namely, that most of the business of importance was over, he must say, that if he had not already had so much experience of the shifts and shuffles of the right honorable gentleman on this occasion, he should have been surprised at this. What would he say to his own notice this very day, of bringing forward, six days after the day for this motion, propositions upon the slave trade? Was that important? Was it early enough for that, although too late for the consideration of the Scots boroughs? Or did he believe that many gentlemen at that time would be in the country, instead of attending to their duty in parliament?—There were two descriptions of persons in this country: those who attempted to reform every thing, and those who were determined to reform nothing—they were both dangerous persons; but in the degree of danger from these doctrines there was no comparison. No man could be so great an enemy to the constitution of England itself, as he who maintained it was perfect, and on that principle resisted all attempts to reform it, and branded those who attempted it as wild speculators and dealers in dangerous innovation.

Mr. Pitt said, he thought that the general objections to the present system ought to be known, and the abuses pointed out, before the house went into a committee; when that was the case, and the honorable gentleman could point out the specific remedy to be adopted, the sooner the question came to be discussed the better. He thought the honorable gentleman had fixed on a wrong day, because the second reading of the Westminster police bill stood for the 17th; and though he trusted there was not much difference of opinion on this subject, yet if it should go into any length of discussion, it could not be expected that those who brought it forward would give way to the discussion of the honorable gentleman's motion, notice of which was subsequent to the other.

Mr. Sheridan hoped there would be no occasion to put off his motion after the day he had mentioned,

but must say one word respecting the lateness of the session, which was, that he recollected a time when the right honorable gentleman opposite had brought forward a great constitutional question, respecting a reform in the representation of the people, even at a later period than what he now proposed for this question.

Mr. Sheridan contended that there were many reasons which prevented him from pressing the business; formerly he had often thought it an improper time to press any thing that looked like reform; because, by some strange perversion, any improvement proposed was converted into ideas of innovation and revolution. He had, however, now got possession of sufficient materials, and had given up his own opinion to that of others, and he was determined to bring the motion on. He did not mind what the right honorable gentleman thought of his assiduity, but if he had been slow, the right honorable gentleman would find that he was secure in his purpose, and he had heard nothing to make him postpone the business longer. As to reforms, he thought those who called for unnecessary reform, and those who said that there was no occasion for any reform, were equally enemies to constitutional principles.

Mr. Sheridan thought all the objections stated would have come in time enough in the committee. He enumerated the materials, such as the charters and sets of burghs which had been violated with impunity, and many other facts which he could prove when the committee sat; and contended, the only opposition therefore that could be made, was as to the time of the session, upon which he thought enough had been said to obviate it. He contended, that there was no power of control vested in any court in Scotland over the transactions of magistrates, which was an important point at issue between the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Dundas)

Mr. Dundas replied; and after a few words from Mr. Pitt, the motion was put and negatived.—After which,

Mr. Sheridan moved, “ That on Wednesday, the 18th of April, this house do take into consideration the petitions and other papers on their table, relative to abuses practised in the internal management of the royal boroughs in Scotland.”

The motion was agreed to.

APRIL 17.

BILL FOR REGULATING THE OFFICE OF JUSTICE OF THE PEACE FOR SUCH PART OF THE COUNTY OF MIDDLESEX AS LIES IN AND NEAR THE METROPOLIS, &c.

The order of the day for the second reading of this bill being moved,

Mr. SHERIDAN observed, that the business now before the house, the justices' trade, had long occupied his attention. He had more than once, with a gentleman of the law, thought of something like a plan for its regulation. But the point by which he had always been checked, was the consideration of undue influence. He could not hit upon a plan that would prevent the thing from being or becoming a job. All the systems of regulation which he had seen in this respect, were nothing more, and he was afraid never would be any thing else than a job. He admitted that there were necessary regulations with regard to the fees of these persons, but they would all be trifled with and evaded. As to the remark, that they should be dismissed from their offices if they did not act right, he feared the security in that respect was not very solid or satisfactory to those who wished to see the magistrates independent. He thought they would lose their offices if they voted wrong at an election; and so no doubt they would if they procured votes by remitting the penalties of the lottery act—or excused an elector,

or an election agent of a court candidate, part of an excise fine for election service. Care, no doubt, would be taken they should act with integrity in these cases. To be serious, he was convinced that this system of police was nothing more than a system of influence.

The bill was read a second time.

APRIL 18.

ROYAL BURGHS IN SCOTLAND.

Mr. SHERIDAN said, that from what had been said on the other side of the house upon this subject, he was in hopes that his motion for the Speaker leaving the chair would have been assented to as a matter of course, and he still hoped that when gentlemen recollected the whole of the subject now brought forward, they would not persevere in their opposition to that mode of proceeding, and that they would not endeavour to induce, or call upon the house to depart from its own pledge, and that they would not offer an insult to a body of men, whom he had the honor to support on the present occasion. If they did take this method of opposition, he must say, they did not themselves seem to recollect how the matter in question stood, and for the purpose of refreshing their recollections he should state the real situation of the business.

Some years since a number of petitions from the royal burghs of Scotland, unanimously pointed out grievances, and demanding redress, were presented to that house. The number of royal burghs were in all sixty-six, and at this time fifty of them had concurred in their complaint. These composed a vast majority of all the trade, commerce, wealth and population of the burghs of North Britain. They composed also a great part of the rank and dignity of it. Persons thus situated, and thus complaining, were worthy of the attention of that house, and most

particularly that of the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Dundas). These petitions stated the general mismanagement, misapplication of money, dilapidation of property, and various injuries and grievances sustained by them in consequence of the usurped authority of certain self-elected magistrates in these burghs; and that to these complaints there was at present no redress to be procured under the law of Scotland. They had sought for redress, but were unable to obtain it in such a situation. He was clearly of opinion that the only application they could make, was an application to parliament; for he maintained that it was a decided point that there was not now a court of competent jurisdiction to afford relief to these complainants. If that was the case, the application to parliament was correct and regular. This was denied by gentlemen on the other side. Here the parties were at issue. The point now remaining to be tried should be submitted to a committee of enquiry—if they could prove these facts, they would immediately fall under the wisdom of parliament, to have that redress which is due from its justice. Three sessions ago he presented a bill to this house, with a view to have these complaints removing the cause of them. The bill was read a first time. When it came to a second reading, he then pledged himself to prove every article of allegation in these petitions. The gentlemen opposite to him said, that they were grievances of great magnitude. They admitted, that if they could be proved, redress ought to, and should be granted; but they said he was irregular in his application, and that he ought to institute a committee of enquiry, and if he proved his facts, redress must follow: upon this he withdrew his bill, conceiving that then he was at issue with them upon the facts of these grievances, and that if he proved them, redress would follow. He then proceeded, he said, to the establishment of these facts, for which purpose he caused copies to be made of all the charters of these Burghs, and all the sets. He sought

for the accounts of the public property, and all alienations, &c. The next session only a part of these was produced, some of the Burghs being deficient in that respect ; afterwards, however, the whole became complete. Last session of parliament the whole came before the house, and it was proposed to go into a committee of enquiry upon the case, that facts might be ascertained, upon which to ground the future proceeding of the house. Upon this the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Dundas) did not pretend to deny these facts, nor had he an idea in his mind, that the right honorable gentleman harbored a thought of insulting the people of Scotland so grossly, as to say to them, now you have collected your proofs, you have prepared to submit your case to the house of commons, you shall not be heard, I will not now consent to inquire, you shall be repulsed—I was only jesting with you formerly ; now I tell you plainly, that apparent frankness was a mere mockery. Nothing of this kind was said, or conveyed last year. On the contrary, there was an implied assent to the inquiry, only it was then stated to be too late in the session. Upon this principle, and seemingly fair prospect of ultimate success, a motion was made on the 27th of May last, and the house entered into a resolution, which he begged the house to hear. (The resolution was then read, the purport of it was that the house would early in the then next session, take into consideration the state of the Royal Burghs.) Here it was evident, that it was the intention of the house to go fairly into this inquiry. This could only be done in a committee, and to refuse a committee, was to refuse every thing that could relate to the subject. He had a right to call on the right honorable gentleman, not only from the duty he owed to the people of North Britain, but also from a sense he ought to have of his own personal honor to consent to this inquiry. He did not expect at least he should hear, at least he should not be content with hearing, that it was not now early

in the session ; it was too mean a quibble to be attended to for a moment—it was too paltry an excuse to merit an answer. Was the session so far advanced as to leave no business remaining that was of importance sufficient to be discussed to insure a full attendance ? was not the business of the slave trade of that description ? Did not the Chancellor of the Exchequer bring forward his plan for a reformation of the representative body of the whole kingdom, at a much later period ? Did not the right hon. gentleman himself bring forward his own India inquiries at a later period ?—Did he suppose that the whole body of the people of Scotland would be satisfied, and that it was quite safe for him to treat them and their representations with contempt ; if he did, and if he thought himself possessed of address sufficient to amuse them in that way, he feared the right honorable gentleman a little deceived himself upon that subject. The claims of this great body of men must be attended to by the house. What did the right honorable gentleman mean to do with the pledge of that house, when instead of submitting to inquiry, or stating by argument any principle of justice on which the inquiry could be refused, he sheltered himself under flimsy evasions, and petty cavils. The fact was, that he knew that enquiry would produce truth—truth would demand justice—justice would be fatal to the cause of the right honorable gentleman. He was ashamed to have his cause exposed ; but let him remember he was vigilantly watched in England, and would be faithfully reported in Scotland, and that if he thought these petty shifts would pass upon the people of North Britain, he was deceived in them, and did not know them so well as he thought he did, nor would he be sure of the continuance of their favor.

The other objection was a little curious, as it had been started on a former day. He meant that the other party called on him to shew a specific remedy to the abuse he complained of, before the house

should enter into this enquiry. This was recommended to the Chancellor of the Exchequer as an observation to be made; and it was a little hard on that right honorable gentleman, because it was giving him a ridiculous character to support; for he said on a former occasion to him, "Do not call upon us for a remedy until you have shewn us your grievance." Now that was the very thing; for before he asked for a remedy, he proposed, in a committee of inquiry, to prove his grievance, and if he failed, he would be content to abandon his application for the remedy. But it was too ridiculous to call upon him to shew his grievance, if they refused him the only means by which he could shew it: and in refusing, pretend to say that the refusal was because he did not specify his remedy. But this was not all; he had, in fact, produced the remedy; it was specified in his bill, and the principle of it was admitted in the debate on the second reading, and the only reason then given for not passing the bill was, that first there should have been established a proof of the grievance. He was willing to go farther—he would state what the object was of his bill now. It was to abolish the self-electing power of the magistrates in these boroughs—without which nothing like justice could be done to the body of people, who complained, for all attempts at palliations, however tried, would be found fruitless.

He had heard it said that there were such grievances in England as well as in Scotland. Was this any reason for giving redress to neither; was justice to be defeated by a community of oppression? If he was to be asked, whether there was any abuse in the boroughs in England, he said, he was ashamed to confess he had no doubt of it: but he must follow up that confession with an observation, that when any extraordinary waste or misapplication of the property of a borough took place in England, there

was something like a mode of enquiry into it possible ; but that was not the case in Scotland—there there was no court of judicature known, which could admit the enquiry. Supposing, for a moment, that there was no court in England competent to entertain enquiries into the abuses of officers in boroughs, and that great abuses were stated to exist in three-fourths of the whole kingdom, what would be the fate of a motion in that house for a committee of enquiry? Would it not be granted? most willingly and eagerly. Why should the case be different with regard to Scotland? And why should not every member of that house think himself bound to examine into the abuses of both, or assent to a proposal for a committee to enquire? He did not think that the people of Scotland should be treated in that way. The right honorable gentleman particularly should not treat them so—he ought to know them better, than to think they would for ever bear such insults. Let but the truth appear, and he would pledge himself that it would appear, if the committee was granted, that not one of the allegations in the petitions would turn out to be false, but that all the abuses of which they complained would be made manifest. It had been asserted by the right honorable gentleman, that there were in Scotland courts competent to take cognizance of the grievances specified in the petitions. He did not wish to give his opinion on the law of Scotland, without first having consulted the opinion of others, who were much more competent to decide that case than himself; but he had consulted a gentleman of great legal knowledge on that subject, and the result of that consultation was, that there was not any court of judicature that could take cognizance of the grievances stated in these petitions. How was this point to be settled? If it should afterwards be found, that there was any competent jurisdiction for the hearing of these complaints, and, on proof, redressing them, then the petitioners should be sent thither; but it

was ridiculous to refuse to hear, whether the case was so or not, merely on the assertion of any individual, who wished to stifle the enquiry. He stated, that he wished for nothing to be granted in consequence of this enquiry, even supposing him to prove the abuses stated in the petitions, but what was granted in the different charters, and which had been defeated, by abuse having grown into usage, and now in Scotland usage had become paramount to all law. It was not, therefore, favor that he was asking, it was justice; it was not to introduce any new mode, but to amend an old one; it was to reform abuse.

Of late it had become a fashion to decry every thing in the nature of reform. It was carried so far as to become a principle in support of general oppression. This brought on a temper that would hardly hear of any thing like reform. Opinions were entertained, that reform led to innovation—innovation to revolution—revolution to anarchy and disorder; and, therefore, that a door should not be opened to reform. No man, who knew the spirit of the constitution of this country, could support this sort of principle. It was the best part of our constitution, that it contained a principle of reform in its very nature; and we had, at this day, nothing in it that was beautiful, that had not been forced from tyrants, and taken from the usurpations of despotism. But there was something, it was said, in the present time, which should deter us from thinking of reform now, and that was, because there had been a revolution in France. There was a time, when some persons thought nobody should even allude to it; that it was unsafe, and almost indecent, to mention it. That time was passed; and we had now no choice upon that subject. It was an event well known to all ranks and descriptions of persons; it made part of the contemplation of the studious—the conversation of the social and communicative; it formed part of the taste of our public entertain-

ments, and mingled in our melody ; it was no longer an object to be dreaded ; and, with the sober and the serious, the only question was, "What wisdom was to be gained by it?" For, with regard to the event itself, and the peace of this country in consequence of it, there needed be but one feeling on the subject,—exultation and joy at the downfall of the despotism of France, the greatest enemy England ever had. That despotism, whose ambitious, turbulent, and restless spirit, cost England so many thousands of her subjects, and so many millions of her money ;—that despotism—that foe to the happiness of the human race—was destroyed. Soon should we—indeed, we already had—felt the beneficial effects of the French Revolution. The National Assembly of France was the best committee of supply England ever had. The safety of our possessions in India was owing to the French Revolution ; and therefore that event, in this point of view, was the greatest blessing that could happen to this country. By assuring us tranquillity abroad, it afforded us leisure to look into abuses at home ; and neither to be intimidated into dangerous compliance with popular clamor, on the one hand—nor too ready to listen to the fears of the most timid on the danger of innovation, on the other:—such was the season to correct abuses. But, according to the opinions of some of the most moderate and well-informed men in this country, there were a number of principles maintained by the National Assembly of France, which would militate ultimately against the true principle of well-regulated liberty. Upon this he could only say, that if all the eloquent octavos, that were filled with the highest praise of the French Revolution, were changed into folios, all that could be said in them would be, at last, reducible to this:—that the destruction of a despotic government is an act of the highest wisdom in a people ; and that, when this was accomplished, the higher order, and the most enlightened class, will

feel, and really possess, all the natural advantages of their fair superiority ; while the lower orders of the people will fall into the rank of useful industry, which was the nerve and sinew of a well-regulated society. But this theory of France had been carried too far, and it had been brought into discussion in this country. That it had been brought into discussion, he admitted ; that the theory had been carried too far, was matter of speculative opinion, which had nothing to do with the real interest of this country, and upon which he should say nothing ; but that, if France, under the reign of despotism, had produced statesmen capable of regenerating a government all at once, or a people capable of instantly performing the duties, and observing the subordination, necessary to a free constitution,—he should have thought the vices of her old government far less than he did at present. The thing for us to attend to was, a rational and sober reformation of abuses, at a time when there was nothing to interrupt us. This was the only way by which we should be sure of avoiding the evil that might attend a reformation by violence ; for if, to every request of the people, their representatives refused to listen, under an idea that some encroachments might be made on the prerogative of the crown, the effect in time would be, that the people would suspect parliament of having too intimate an alliance with the power of the crown ; and, by this popular distrust, they would be at last, in their defence, driven to the throne for shelter against popular resentment, and compelled to fortify the place in which they took refuge. This was the most sure way of making a real division in the country.—It was well known that every body thought upon public subjects : there was a spirit of enquiry excited amongst all classes of men ; it increased every day, and every hour ;—experience taught us it was impossible to check it ; wisdom ought to teach us to prevent it from becoming dangerous ; for so it would become, if the people

had any reason to suspect their grievances were treated with contempt. By first resolving only to procure redress for grievances, they might fly to anarchy and confusion. If we suffered this, it would be too late to talk about the probable mischief of reform. He must, then, say to the house, that, unless they wished to encourage the idea that the people will have no relief, however pressing their necessities, or however just their claims—unless they wished to tell the people they really had no friends in the house of commons, and that their rights were totally neglected—they would yield redress with cheerfulness, when fairly claimed. This was the only way to keep the people of this country contented with their condition. One proof of a disposition to attend to the wishes of the people, would have more effect in preserving their attachment to the constitution, than all the eloquent speeches that had been made to praise it. These were not sentiments peculiar to him; the propriety of them must be felt by every man who heard him. He rejoiced that they were not merely felt, but adopted as a principle of action; that men, whose characters, situations, and consequence, placed them above the suspicion of sinister motives, had resolved to rear a standard, to which all who sought redress of grievance, or reform of abuse, by loyal and constitutional means, might repair with confidence. This was the true course to prevent the people from putting themselves under leaders, whose object might be, not so much to reform, as to destroy. Those who had undertaken it, would, he trusted, follow it up with the same youthful ardor, but more steady perseverance, than the right honorable gentleman opposite (Mr. Pitt,) that reform which had been the first object of his political life. Indeed, it was but a bad compliment to the constitution, to say it was a building which we could not touch, without the danger of its overthrow. Such a building, the people would be too ready to view as

an old edifice, so far decayed as to be incapable of support. He, who now obstinately refused to listen to proposals for a temperate reform, must be destitute of prudence and discretion. He then moved,

“ That the house of commons having received petitions from forty-six of the royal burghs of Scotland, complaining of various grievances in the government of the said burghs; and the house, after taking the same into consideration, having, on the 17th of February, 1788, ordered that notorial copies and sets of the royal burghs should be laid before this house; and then having made several other orders for accounts of the cess, stent or land tax, levied in the said burghs, and of the sums of money paid the Receiver-General on account of the same; and for accounts of the revenues of the said burghs; and for accounts of the lands of the said burghs alienated since the Union; and then having, on the 10th of June, 1790, renewed such orders; and, in obedience to the said orders, a great many accounts having been laid before this house;—it is incumbent on this house to proceed to the examination of the said papers and accounts, in such mode as shall best ascertain whether the grievances complained of are true, and what remedy this house ought to apply to such grievances.”

The Lord Advocate of Scotland, Mr. Fox, Mr. Anstruther, Mr. Steele, Mr. Dundas, Sir J. Johnstone, and Mr. Rolle followed. The latter gentleman observed, that his regard for the constitution led him to oppose every motion for reform that had been or could be brought forward; and as to what the honorable gentleman had concluded his speech with, that this was the proper time for reform and innovation, he must declare that the honorable gentleman had delivered one of the most inflammatory, wicked, and dangerous speeches he had ever heard; and as long as he had a seat in parliament, he was determined never to countenance any species of reform whatever, because he new the constitution of this country was the best and most admirable in the world. With regard to what had been said about the gradual abolition of the slave trade, he had voted for that, and he was happy to think that many petitioners for the total abolition were well satisfied with the step that was taken.

Mr. Sheridan hoped the house would grant him the indulgence usually granted to the mover of a question—that of making a short reply to the several arguments urged against it. To the honorable gentleman (Mr. Rolle) who with so much knowledge of the rules and language of debate, had declared his former speech to be inflammatory and wicked; he begged leave to make use of a right honorable gentleman's words, as addressed to himself, and to assure the honorable gentleman; nothing he could say should either ruffle his temper, or disturb his tranquillity of mind. The honorable gentleman who was so zealous an admirer of the constitution, was content to admire it upon trust, without examining its principles, or comparing its excellencies with its defects—and in this he acted wisely; for to do the one, required only confidence in the commendations bestowed by others; but to do the other, required knowledge and understanding. If the honorable gentleman had observed the same discretion with respect to his speech, he would have saved himself the trouble of applying terms to which it did not deserve. Had he waited to form an opinion on trust from the opinions of others, he would have thought it neither inflammatory nor wicked; for he would venture to assert, there was not another gentleman in the house who had formed such an opinion. He had no wish to break the rest of the right honorable gentleman, or to make his meals uncomfortable; for, of all the members of administration, the right honorable gentleman, by his open and manly way of doing things, whether wright or wrong, had conciliated his good opinion the most. He could, therefore, have no intention of making him uneasy, and rejoiced to have the right honorable gentleman's own word for it that he had not. Notwithstanding the composure with which the right honorable gentleman had began, he had soon forgot he was not to be angry, and expressed himself in tones that did not indicate quite

so much calmness as he professed. If that was the consequence of any thing he had said, it was not the object. The object was to prevail on the right honorable gentleman to agree to go into the committee for which he had moved, and in that he had succeeded; for he now understood the right honorable gentleman did agree [Mr. Dundas said across the table, No! No!].—To what then said Mr. Sheridan, did the right honorable gentleman agree? for I appeal to the recollection of the house, whether his words did not clearly imply his assent to a committee—[Mr. Pitt whispered Mr. Dundas]—I wish, said Mr. Sheridan, the right honorable gentleman may not be prompted. I should be glad that he had no watchmen set over him on this occasion but mine. [Mr. Dundas said he had not consented to a committee of enquiry.]—Mr. Sheridan proceeded: he was at a loss where to find the right honorable gentleman's meaning. He had formerly brought in a bill, on the presumption that the abuses it meant to remedy did exist, with a view that those who thought they did not, might have an opportunity of proving in the committee on the bill, that it was unnecessary, if they had the means of doing so. He was then told by the right honorable gentleman, his mode of proceeding was irregular; that he began where he ought to end; and the proper course would be, first to call for evidence to prove the existence of the grievance, and then propose his remedy: He had adopted the suggestion, and now the evidence was on the table, and he was ready to prove the grievances did exist, he was denied the proper parliamentary means, and called upon to bring forward the remedy he proposed. He was not unprepared upon that subject; but as he knew few gentlemen, perhaps not the right honorable gentleman himself, had examined, or even perused the evidence on the table, he felt the difficulty of calling upon them to vote resolutions, on documents which they had not read. If gentlemen compelled

him to proceed in this manner, it was impossible to believe they were serious, or that they did not wish to get rid of an investigation which they were afraid to meet. The right honorable gentleman had affected to say, that he was not sincere in his prosecution of this business. The right honorable gentleman had, doubtless, been too attentive to the consistency of his own political conduct, to attend much to that of so humble an individual as himself; and this must be his excuse for an assertion which he could not support by a single fact. He called upon the right honorable gentleman to mention a time in which he had not been as zealous an advocate for the rights of the people, as he professed to be at present. That those rights were sacred, and that reform was necessary wherever they were violated, were the first political principles he had adopted. With those principles he had come into parliament; with those principles he had connected himself with men who merited his confidence, and the confidence of their country. If the right honorable gentleman supposed he had abandoned those principles, that he was under any party influence, or private obligation, that withheld him from acting upon them, he desired, once for all, to tell him, he was grossly misinformed. The right honorable gentleman talked of his own popularity in Scotland; that he had stood candidate for a county, and carried his election against all the influence of government, by more than three to one; with much more implied by his manner, which his natural modesty would not allow him to express by words. But then came the conclusion—all this was before he was tried as a political man; and from that time to the present he had taken care to have the influence of government in his favor. To this popularity he would advise him not to trust with too much confidence, any more than to the boasted apathy of his temper. He admitted, the right honorable gentleman would not wince for trifles—as Montesquieu

said, you must slay a Muscovite to make him feel—and the right honorable gentleman had sometimes shewn that even his insensibility was not impregnable. It was impossible to proceed with any degree of regularity or effect, but in a committee. As soon as that was granted, he would move certain propositions arising out of the evidence; the particular points of which he should select, and every member would have an opportunity of examining and controverting them, which could not be done so fully in any other mode. To this it was objected, that admitting the abuses, the remedy which he proposed, instead of being a benefit, instead of encouraging a liberal spirit of industry, and promoting the prosperity of the burghs, would introduce misery and confusion; and in support of this argument, they who adduced it, stumbled on Paisley, as an instance of increasing wealth under the old system. Now, it so happened, that Paisley was not under that system, nor had any such grievances to check its industry as those complained of by the petitioners. It was, therefore, an instance to his purpose, not to their's; and gave reason to presume, that the decay and poverty of various other places, were owing to the abuses of their internal government. Neither was his wish to alter the mode of electing the councils, which to him seemed the only effectual remedy, a well-founded objection. When the house was satisfied there were abuses to correct, it would then be as open to them to adopt that remedy which to their wisdom should seem the best, as if he had never proposed any remedy at all. It was now admitted, the burghers at large had no means of control over the expenditure of their money; that they had not even access to the accounts kept by the counsel, and could not apply to any tribunal to compel the production of them. Was not this a flagrant and scandalous grievance? Was it not as incredible as any he had stated? And yet, for this, no remedy

had ever been proposed. He should prove also, if allowed the means, that more was raised under the head of cess, than was paid to government. Some of the accounts on the table, shewed a considerable difference between the assessments and the payments; and although the balance might have been honestly disposed, the circumstance was a presumption of malversation, and a sufficient ground for enquiry. When the learned lord mentioned the cases in which he had been employed as an advocate, he believed he had forgotten that one of them was a case of dues of another kind. His declaration on these occasions was, doubtless, worthy of higher praise than it would have been becoming for the learned lord to bestow; but he feared it might have been the occasion of the loss of the cause; and had he been the client, he should have begged the learned lord to spare his declamation, and stick as closely as possible to the facts and law. But what was the nature of this remedy, admitting it to exist? Every poor man—every industrious manufacturer, whose daily labor was barely sufficient to maintain his wife and family, was to proceed by a separate action. If he conceived that he was overcharged, he must pay his money in the first instance, and then leave his home to apply to some tribunal, or pay for the declamation of an advocate to get it back. In this pursuit, he would have the satisfaction of knowing that he must pay all his own expenses, and contribute his share to the expense of the defence; for it was the invariable rule, that the magistrates defended all suits against them out of the public purse, and levied money accordingly. This was the miserable remedy held out to the poor and industrious, on whom such overcharges were likely to fall the heaviest, even by those who affirmed that a remedy did exist. Could any man imagine that it ever was effectual? Yet even this remedy they had not in fact; for, as they had not access to the accounts supposed to be kept by the magistrates,

and as the cess was blended with other dues, they had no means of discovering, much less of proving, that overcharges were made. There was proof, also, of abuse in the alienation of property. They who denied this, admitted that they knew of no case in which redress had been obtained; although they said there was a remedy; and the reason was the same as in the other abuses—there were no means of coming at the accounts. It was only since the papers had been called for by the house, that the private deposits of the councils had been unlocked, and some of the abuses, of which they contained the proofs, brought to light. His honorable friend (Mr. Anstruther) had said, that the charters were worded in terms which time had rendered obscure; and that usage, in all cases, was held to be the best explanation. He affirmed, that all the charters on the table, without exception, gave, in clear and express terms, the rights of electing the magistrates to the burgesses, and not to the magistrates to elect their successors. The act of 1649, which made sets of the burghs what they now were, expressly admitted the clear interpretation of the charters; and, like all acts for depriving men of their right of franchise, assigned reasons for doing so; and among others, recited the abuses and inconveniences of popular elections, as those who disliked that mode did now. If the house of commons, when they passed the septennial bill—which they had as much right to do, as to pass an act creating them all dukes, marquisses, and earls—had passed a bill reciting all the real and supposed abuses of popular elections; that, therefore, it was fit to put an end to such elections; and enacting that the members of that, and each succeeding house, should elect their own successors; what security would the people have had, either that no more money should be levied on them in taxes than was necessary, or that they should have a fair account of its application? Were such a proposition to be now made,

what would be the opinion of his honorable friend? He knew too well the integrity of his heart, and the rectitude of his understanding, not to be assured that he would meet it with indignant opposition. Yet the situation of the people of Great Britain would then be no worse than that of the burghers of Scotland, under the present system of self-elected councils. It was easy to lavish praises on the constitution, but it became the house of commons to praise it, not by their words, but their actions; to endeavour to extend the spirit and the principles of it to all the inferior constitutions under its protection. It mattered little, to tell him that there were similar abuses in English boroughs. It was a poor satisfaction to the petitioner from Scotland to be told, that his English fellow-subject endured the same grievance. There might, for any thing he knew to the contrary, be more to reform in England than in Scotland; but, while those who felt the grievance did not complain—while they did not petition for redress—it was not his business to move such reforms. When they did complain—when they did apply in an orderly and constitutional manner for redress, whether from Scotland or England—they were entitled to every degree of attention that parliament could bestow. The power of electing their own magistrates, he was convinced, would do more to correct abuses, than any other remedy that could be devised. Magistrates so elected, it was said, might be as arbitrary in levying money, and as profuse in spending it, as the present. If they were, the people would have a speedy remedy; they might turn out those magistrates, choose honester men, and call the defaulters to account.—Abuse might be accidental, but could not be systematic. The effect of this remedy would even be to turn out the opulent burghers, and let in the poor. He did not like it the better on this account; but as matters stood, it would do just the reverse; for the persons in possession of the corpora-

tions on the present system, were, in general, the meanest. In proof of this, he read over the names of the counsel at Pittenweem, with the quality of each—colliers, taylors, weavers, &c. and asked if those were men more respectable than were likely to be chosen by a popular election.

An honorable baronet (Sir J. Johnstone) had candidly said, an abuse being admitted to exist, he would vote for a committee. The honorable baronet, in a public letter, had formerly said, that considering himself as trustee for the counsels of the burghs whom he represented, he should think it as nefarious in him to do any thing to abridge or abolish their privileges. This was, no doubt, the feeling of many other gentlemen. They considered themselves not as the representatives of the people, but of the counsels of the burghs, by whom they were elected; which accounted for the little support he received from the gentlemen from Scotland; and there was reason to suppose, that the same corporation spirit operated on many of the representatives of English boroughs. There was no need to fear but that if the committee was granted, the Scots burghs would meet with all the support to which they were entitled. There was no such thing as popular election in Scotland. The people there had no political weight. If the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Dundas) would turn his attention to this point, if he would give them the political weight which the people in all free governments ought to possess, he would bind them more strongly to their native soil,—he would attach them more firmly to the constitution, than by empty praises which they could not feel, because they had little among them to which they could refer. The redress for which he moved should not be got rid of by any dexterity of management on the present occasion, nor any direct refusal to enquire. It was in its nature such as must, and should be granted. He begged pardon for the expression; but when

he knew the petitioners were resolved to persevere, deeply impressed, as he was, with the justice of their claim, it was not too much presumption to say, that in a time of increasing reason and declining préjudice, the cause of truth must gain by every discussion, until it was finally carried.

Mr. Pitt said, the motion was neither such as ought to be negatived nor passed. The honorable gentleman might move his proposition of reform, and then the house might go into a committee to consider of it, if that should seem proper. He, therefore, recommended to withdraw the motion, and take the other course. If the motion was persisted in, he should move to adjourn.

Mr. Sheridan recapitulated his reasons for proceeding as he had done. If he was allowed to go into a committee, he had gained his end, and would withdraw his present motion. In that committee he should move propositions of fact, founded on the evidence; and on these propositions, when reported and agreed to by the house, he should move his remedy.

Mr. Dundas asked, if the alteration of the present sets of the burghs was not his object.

Mr. Sheridan said his object was, first to establish the facts, which, he trusted, the evidence would accomplish; and then, to propose a bill founded on those facts.

Mr. Dundas again objected, that to propose an alteration of the sets of the burghs was the avowed object of going into a committee.

Mr. Sheridan again said, it was impossible for any proposition of his, in the shape of a remedy, to be argued fairly, till it was shewn there was a grievance that called for it.

Mr. Pitt asked, if the honorable gentleman meant to withdraw his motion.

Mr. Sheridan withdrew his motion, and then moved,

“That the several petitions, papers, and accounts, presented to the house in the last parliament, relative to the internal government of the royal burghs

of Scotland, be referred to the consideration of a committee."

Mr. Pitt said, this was the same motion on which the house had been debating irregularly before, and the same in substance with that which was negatived before the holidays. The materials for judging were on the table; and if gentlemen thought that they contained no grounds for the remedy intimated by the honorable gentleman, they would do right in voting against going into the committee.

The house divided on the motion for referring the papers, &c. to a committee—ayes 27; noes 69.

Mr. Sheridan, in strong terms, expressed his surprise at this decision, and said the business should not be so dismissed. The petitioners were determined to persevere; and while that was the case, he would persist in bringing it forward from day to day, and from session to session, under the persuasion that the house would be their counsel—that they had only to adduce their proofs—they had not desired leave to substantiate their case by counsel at the bar. This they might now feel to be a proper step; he should consult them upon it tomorrow, and give an early notice of a motion for admitting them to be heard by counsel, or of bringing forward their complaint in some other shape.

APRIL 30.

ROYAL BURGHS IN SCOTLAND.

Mr. SHERIDAN presented a petition on the behalf of the burgesses of the royal boroughs of Scotland, stating the progress of their case before the house, referring to their petition formerly presented to the house, and now praying to be heard by their counsel at the bar of the house, to prove the existence of the grievances complained of, and stating that they were perfectly ready for that purpose.

Mr. Dundas objected to the receiving the petition, on account of the informality of the mode proposed, for that it referred to a former petition, and also the lateness of the session; and also, that if

such a petition should be heard at all, the burgesses who do not complain, and those who are charged with having committed abuses, should have notice of this proceeding, for which there was no time in the present session.

Mr. Sheridan derided the petty shifts made use of to keep justice aloof from the present case. He was denied the committee to enquire, because he was told, that first he should establish the existence of some grievances before the house could think of giving its time to the subject; and that when he was going to do in the most regular way, he was told he should not be heard at all. The truth was, there was but one objection, and one wish in the mind of the right honorable gentleman who opposed this. An objection to the complaints because they were true, and a wish to defeat the application, because it was just. However, in his endeavors to conceal the subject from the public view, he should not succeed; for although defeated so often by influence, he should still persist until he accomplished his object; he should move, on some day in the present session, a string of resolutions that would be descriptive of the state of these burghs, the truth of which the right honorable gentleman would not dare to combat. He had told him on a former day, he should be carefully watched here, and faithfully reported in Scotland; and he on that occasion had been pleased to talk of his popularity. Since that time he had received letters from different parts, and from the most enlightened, as well as the most respectable, persons in Scotland, and they spoke of the right honorable Secretary in terms not very flattering to his popularity.

The question was put, that the petition be received, and passed in the negative.

PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.

In the spring of this year an association took place among several persons of consequence, in and out of parliament; the purpose of whose uniting was to obtain a reform in the representation of the people. It soon counted among its members some of the most con-*

* The following is a Copy of the Declaration and Address of the Society.

Freemasons' Tavern, 26th April, 1792.

At a General Meeting of the Society established on the 11th inst., under the title of THE FRIENDS OF THE PEOPLE, associated for the purpose of obtaining a Parliamentary Reform, William Henry Lambton, Esq. in the Chair,

Received a report from the committee appointed by the resolution of the 19th instant, consisting of the following persons:—

William Baker, Esq. M. P. Chairman; Charles Grey, Esq. M. P.; Samuel Whitbread, jun. Esq. M. P.; John Wharton, Esq. M. P.; Richard Brinsley Sheridan, Esq. M. P.; Philip Francis, Esq. M. P.; Hon. Thomas Maitland, M. P.; William Henry Lambton, Esq. M. P.; George Rous, Esq.; John Godfrey, Esq.; William Cunningham, Esq.; James Mackintosh, Esq.

Read a draught of an Address to the People of Great Britain, contained in the report of the committee.

Resolved unanimously, That the said address is approved of and adopted by this meeting.

Resolved unanimously, That the declaration already agreed on, together with the said address, be printed and published, with the names of the subscribing members, and that the committee be instructed to print and publish the same.

DECLARATION.

A number of persons having seriously reviewed and considered the actual situation of public affairs, and state of the kingdom, and having communicated to each other their opinions on these subjects, have agreed and determined to institute a society, for the purpose of proposing to parliament, and to the country, and of promoting, to the utmost of their power, the following constitutional objects, making the preservation of the constitution, on its true principles, the foundation of all their proceedings.

First.—To restore the freedom of election, and a more equal representation of the people in parliament.

Secondly.—To secure to the people a more frequent exercise of their right of electing their representatives.

The persons, who have signed their names to this agreement, think that these two fundamental measures will furnish the power and the means of correcting the abuses, which appear to them to

icious characters, among the merchants and literary men throughout the kingdom. They published their sentiments and resolutions with great spirit and freedom; and determined in the ensuing session, to make a formal motion for a reform in the parliamentary repre-

ave arisen from a neglect of the acknowledged principles of the constitution, and of accomplishing those subordinate objects of reform, which they deem to be essential to the liberties of the people, and to the good government of the kingdom.

Signed, &c.

ADDRESS TO THE PEOPLE OF GREAT BRITAIN.

No man, who is not ready to express his concurrence in our principles, by signing the declaration, can be admitted into our society. The objects of it, as we conceive, are of a nature at all times fit to be pursued and recommended to the country. At different periods they have heretofore been avowed and supported by the highest authorities in this kingdom; by eminent individuals, and considerable bodies of men; by Mr. Locke and Judge Blackstone; by the late Earl of Chatham, and Sir George Savile; by the Duke of Richmond, the Marquis of Lansdowne, Mr. Pitt, and Mr. Fox; by petitions from several counties, and by repeated declarations from the city of London.

In appealing to the avowed opinions of men of established reputation, or of distinguished rank in their country, we do not mean to strengthen the reason, or enforce the necessity of the measure we propose, so much as to obviate all personal imputations, which the enemies of the cause will be ready to throw upon those who support it. It is not that, on our own account, we dread the effect, or regard the impression, which such imputations may produce; but we think it material to the credit and success of our proceedings, to shew, that we are not aiming at reforms unthought of by wise and virtuous men: that our opinions neither possess the advantage, nor are liable to the objection of novelty; and that we cannot be accused or suspected of factious purposes, or dangerous designs, without extending the same accusation or suspicion to the motives of men, whose situation and property, independent of their character, principles, and abilities, have given them a most important stake in the peace and good government of the kingdom.

Convinced by our own reflections, by experience, and by authority, that the thing we propose to do, is fit to be done, we have, with equal deliberation, weighed the reasons that may recommend, or be objected to the present time, as the most or least proper for bringing it forward. On this point, we have no address to make to the determined enemies of a reform of every kind. Their objection, whether valid or not, is to the substance of the measure, and cannot be abated by circumstance. To those, who concur generally in the principle, but who may be inclined, by particular reasons, to defer the attempt, we seriously wish to submit the following considerations:—That admitting this to be a

sentation. Conformably to the plan proposed, Mr. Grey gave notice, on the 30th of April, that he intended in the following session to carry into execution the designed proposed by the society. He founded its propriety on the opinion of the leading men in the house. Mr. Fox

season of general tranquillity in the country, it is, on that account, the more proper for temperate reflection, and prudent exertions to accomplish any necessary improvement; it is the time when practical measures for that purpose are most likely to be adopted with discretion and pursued with moderation. If we are persuaded to wait for other times, of a different complexion, for times of public complaint, or general discontent, we shall then be told, that general remedies are not fit to be proposed in the moment of particular disorder, and that it is our duty to wait for the return of quiet days, unless we mean to create or encrease confusion in the country. The result of this dilemma, if it be suffered to prevail, is pure and absolute inactivity at present, and for ever. On the other hand, if it be true, as we are convinced it is, that, in this general appearance of tranquillity, there is some mixture of discontent, as well as of strong and well-grounded opinion, on the subject of abuses in the government, and corruptions of the constitution, we wish it to be considered by men, whose judgment has been formed or, enlightened by experience, and whose actions are most likely to be directed by prudence, whether, in taking proper measures to remove the cause and objects of such discontent and opinion, the choice of the time be not a material part of the measure; and whether the earliest time that can be taken, for preventing the encrease of an existing evil, be not the safest and the best?

The example and situation of another kingdom, are held out to deter us from innovations of any kind. We say, that the reforms we have in view, are not innovations. Our intention is, not to change, but to restore; not to displace, but to reinstate the constitution upon its true principles and original ground. In the conduct of persons most likely to reproach us with a spirit of innovation, we see a solid ground for retorting the imputation. Their professions of admiration of the beauty and of zeal for the security of the constitution, appear to us too lavish to be sincere, especially when compared with those practical violations, with which they suffer this beautiful system to be invaded, and to which they never refuse to give their concurrence. They will not innovate, but they are no enemies to gradual decay; as if the changes insensibly produced by time, and nourished by neglect, were not in effect the most dangerous innovations. But what security have we, that the dispositions of such men are not something worse than passive? How are we assured that, in praising the constitution, their intention is not to adorn a victim, which they wish to sacrifice, or to flatter the beauty they are endeavoring to corrupt? Let their intention be what it may, we answer their accusation in the words of one of the wisest of mankind:* "That time is the greatest inno-

* Lord Bacon.

and Mr. Pitt had both, declared themselves unequivocally on this matter, and the majority of the nation was of the same opinion. The critical state of the times had induced those who saw the necessity of obviating the probable consequences of the general discontents through-

vator; and if time of course alter things to the worse, and if wisdom and counsel shall not alter them to the better, what shall be the end?"

By the reform proposed by Lord Chatham,* he declared in the house of lords, that he meant *to infuse a portion of new health into the constitution*. The Duke of Richmond has declared,† that "his reasons in favor of a parliamentary reform were formed on the experience of twenty-six years, which, whether in or out of government, had equally convinced him, that the restoration of a genuine house of commons, by a renovation of the rights of the people, was the only remedy against that system of corruption, which had brought the nation to disgrace and poverty, and threatened it with the loss of liberty."

Other authorities, in favor of a parliamentary reform, as direct and explicit as these, might be quoted in abundance. The public is possessed of them. We rather wish to encounter, because we are sure we can efface, in every rational mind, the impression, which may have been made by a view of those events which have attended a total change in the constitution of France. We deny the existence of any resemblance whatever between the cases of the two kingdoms; and we utterly disclaim the necessity of resorting to similar remedies.—We do not believe that, at this day, an absolute avowed despotism, in the hands of the executive power, would be endured in this country. But who can say, to what conclusion the silent unresisted operation of abuses, incessantly acting, and constantly encreasing, may lead us hereafter; what habits it may gradually create; what power it may finally establish? The abuses in the government of France were suffered to gather and accumulate, until nothing but an eruption could put an end to them. The discontent of the people was converted into despair. Preventive remedies were either not thought of in time, or were not proposed until it was too late to apply them with effect. The subversion of the ancient government ensued. The inference from this comparison is at once so powerful and so obvious, that we know not by what argument to illustrate or enforce it. We mean to avert for ever from our country the calamities inseparable from such convulsions. If there be, as it is said, in any part of this kingdom, a disposition to promote confusion, or even to arrive at improvement by unconstitutional and irregular courses, we hold ourselves as strictly pledged to resist that disposition, wherever it may appear, as to pursue our own objects by the unexceptionable methods. If, on the contrary, it be true, that the mass of the people are satisfied with the present state of things, or indifferent about it; if they approve of the representation as it stands, the

* Jan 22, 1770.

Jan. 17, 1783.

out the great body of the people, to frame such a system of representing them as might, by its equitableness, put an end to their incessant complaints of being what they justly styled misrepresented, and made the instruments of ministerial projects, in which their interests

form of election, and the duration of the trust; or if, condemning these things, they are determined, from indolence or despair, not to attempt to correct them; then, indeed, the efforts of individuals may be ineffectual, but they cannot be injurious to the peace of the community. If the spirit of the constitution be dead in the hearts of the people, no human industry can revive it.—To affirm, that extensive mischief may be done by a statement of facts or arguments, which make no general impression on the public mind, is a proposition that contradicts itself, and requires no other refutation. We trust it will be proved by experiment, that these inconsistent assertions are equally unfounded, and that the people of this country are no more disposed to submit to abuses without complaint, than to look for redress in any proceedings repugnant to the laws, or unwarranted by the constitution. Between anarchy and despotism, speaking for ourselves, we have no choice to make; we have no preference to give. We neither admit the necessity, nor can we endure the idea of resorting to either of these extremities as a refuge from the other. The course we are determined to pursue, is equally distant from both.

Finally, we assert, that it must be blindness not to see, and treachery not to acknowledge,

That “* the instruments of power are not perhaps so open and avowed as they formerly were; and, therefore, are the less liable to jealous and invidious reflections; but they are not the weaker upon that account. In short, our national debts and taxes have, in their natural consequences, thrown such a weight of power into the executive scale of government, as we cannot think was intended by our patriot ancestors, who gloriously struggled for the abolition of the then formidable parts of the prerogative, and by an unaccountable want of foresight, established this system in their stead.” Our general object is to recover and preserve the true balance of the constitution.

These are the principles of our association, and, on our steady adherence to them, we look with a just confidence to the approbation and support of the people in the prosecution of our object. A measure, so likely to be opposed by the united strength of various interests, can never succeed, but by the declared and hearty concurrence of the nation.

Resolved unanimously, That a motion be made in the house of commons, at an early period in the next session of parliament, for introducing a parliamentary reform.

Resolved unanimously, That Charles Grey, Esq. be requested to make, and the Hon. Thomas Erskine to second, the above motion. Signed, by the unanimous order of the meeting,

W. H. LAMPTON, Chairman.

were sacrificed to the ambitious views of their superiors.—This declaration called up Mr. Pitt, who inveighed with uncommon warmth against the designs of the society. This was not a time, he said, for moving questions that involved the peace and safety of the nation, and endangered the constitution of the kingdom. He was no enemy to a reform obtained peaceably by a general concurrence; but he thought the present time highly improper, and decidedly inimical to such an attempt.

Mr. SHERIDAN began with remarking, that a noble friend of his had stated, from a very poor authority, a circumstance of two persons agreeing to fight, to prevent a misunderstanding. He should have imagined the noble lord (North) would rather have considered that as a sort of Irish excuse for a duel, than as any serious matter of argument. When the motion should come forward, he trusted it would be met by argument and reason, rather than by declamation and clamor, for that had been a day of clamor, rather than a day of debate. He hoped there would be no radical dispute among those with whom he had the honor to act in general, or at least that their difference on a particular point would not be increased by the applause of the other side of the house. They who thought as he did, and had signed the paper in question, felt great anxiety in differing from their friends. They had not clamor to support them, and could find consolation only in the goodness of their cause. A noble lord (Carhampton) in terms neither very civil nor parliamentary, had doubted the sincerity of his right honorable friend, (Mr. Fox) in what he had said in their favor. They wanted not the signature of his right honorable friend to assure them of his concurrence. They had his bond in the steadiness of his political principle, and the integrity of his heart. An honorable gentleman (Mr. Powys) had called on all who thought as he did, to protest against their object. It was wisely done: for to protest was much easier than to argue. When the day of discussion came, however, he hoped those who thought with the honorable gentleman would have more respect, if not for

the society, for the country at large, than to think that protests without argument would be sufficient. No question, he knew, could be more unpopular in the house; he had not so bad a taste as to wish to speak upon it on that account; but he should think it base and contemptible to shrink from his opinion, because an unmeaning clamor was excited against it. There was, indeed, one description of people who would be still more clamorous against the members, and the object of the association—all those who wished the destruction of the constitution, under the pretext of reform; and yet these were the men whom they were told they must act with. Far from it; the true allies of such men were those who opposed a necessary and a temperate reform; who, on whatever sophistical arguments, abandoned their former principles in support of it. Was it a light argument mentioned by the learned gentleman, who supported the necessity of reform with so much ability, that sixty or seventy peers had been created or promoted, by the present minister for public services, for no distinguished abilities, but merely for their interest in returning members of the house of commons? Here peerages had been bartered for election interest; in a neighbouring kingdom they had been all but proved to have been put up to auction for money. An honorable county member had gone so far as to charge the minister with making men peers not fit to be his groom, and yet he was loud in the clamor against reform. The right honorable gentleman (Mr. Pitt) formerly so zealous in the cause of reform, failing in his proposition for adding one hundred members to the house of commons, had added almost an equal number to the house of peers; in his public letter to the reverend Mr. Wyvill, he professed himself a friend, both as a man and a minister, to parliamentary reform, and pledged himself to pursue it till accomplished. What had since happened to change his opinion? He had been eight years a

minister, and found he could do without it. They who thought reform at all times improper, were consistent; but let them be careful of what alliance they-formed against it. Let them be particularly on their guard against the right honorable gentleman; who, while they leagued to oppose reform, for ever was watching only an opportunity convenient for himself; the constitution had no enemy so dangerous as hypocrisy; those who clung to it with all its defects; no man so much to dread as he who kept his principles in reserve, to be acted upon as he saw expedient for his own ambition or popularity, who one day lead on the powers of prerogative, and another, the wildest advocate of democracy. Mr. Sheridan declared, he wished the question to be considered as no party question;—not a miserable scramble for places and power;—but to be taken upon its own merits, as an important constitutional question. With respect to the unreasonableness of the time for bringing forward such a motion, he wished to know whether it was considered so on account of the prosperous and tranquil state of the country, or on account of the increasing discontents of the people. Let it be branded with both; the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Burke) he supposed, wrote his pacifying pamphlet to quiet those discontents. One of the chief reasons that induced him to sign his name to the paper, was the seeing Mr. Walker's name to the Manchester resolutions. Mr. Walker, he said, was a very respectable character, a man of sense, character, and opulence. Mr. T. Cooper, also, he had the pleasure to know. He took notice of a right honorable gentleman's (Mr. Burke) declaration, that he had been twenty-seven years in parliament, and during the whole of that period, excepting only about two years, had complained every year, that they were violating some principles of the constitution, or infringing some privileges of the house; and then he supposed the right honorable gentleman said to the Bucking-

hamshire freeholders, "Oh, there was nothing in that; it was only our party way of talking: all the reform we want, is only to get into the places of the other gentlemen, and then things will go on well." With regard to what the right honorable gentleman had said, of the correspondence between Mr. Cooper and the clubs at Paris, if he were furnished with the right honorable gentleman's speech, during the American war, in answer to some charges of having corresponded with the Americans, he dared say, he should have a very good excuse set up. Just as it answered the purpose for argument the people were lowered or exalted; one gentleman had talked of their nourishing a young lion, and another of a storm. Those metaphors might be applied either way. If they were at sea in a ship, and were to see a storm rising, it would be more natural for a good seaman to say of the vessel, "there is a storm coming, let's examine the tackle, and see that her bottom is sound;" than to say, "the ship is going on in her regular course; let her proceed, without any fears for her safety." Another gentlemen had talked of the citadel. He would ask, was the citadel attacked? If it was threatened, was it not proper that they should repair to the ramparts and mount guard? With respect to the Russian war, the house, unfortunately for the honorable gentleman's argument, did nothing against the measure; but the people without doors disliked the war, and that compelled the right honorable Chancellor of the Exchequer to abandon his purpose.

Major Hobart said, as the honorable gentleman had thought proper to allude particularly to the Irish government, he begged leave to trouble the house with a few words on the subject. Peetrages never were sold, he said, as had been clearly proved. With regard to the volunteer associations, many gentlemen of great respectability had entered into them; and when Ireland had gained her independence, she felt her consequence and her prosperity. But when a reform of parliament was in agitation, the volunteers were embodied in the capital to intimidate the house of commons, upon which all the

respectable men left their corps and retired; and parliament was dissolved, and reform was heard of no more. He said, with regard to the subject of that day's notice, it was a little extraordinary, that the honorable gentleman should call upon those who objected to any motion to argue against it, before any specific motion had been stated, or he believed even considered by the honorable gentlemen themselves.

Mr. Sheridan in explanation said, Mr. Grattan had publicly asserted in the house of commons in Dublin, that peerages were sold, and no satisfactory contradiction had been made.

DECEMBER 13.

ADDRESS ON THE KING'S SPEECH AT THE OPENING OF THE SESSION.

The session was this day opened. The speech from the throne declared, that His Majesty having judged it necessary to embody a part of the militia, he had called the parliament together within the time limited for that purpose. It attributed these measures to seditious practices that had already been discovered, and a spirit of tumult and disorder that had shewn itself in such acts of riot and insurrection, as to require the interposition of a military force to support the civil magistrate. It continued to mention, that the industry employed to excite discontent, on various pretexts, and in different parts of the kingdom, appeared to proceed from a design to attempt the destruction of our happy constitution, and the subversion of all order and government; and that this design had evidently been pursued in connection and concert with persons in foreign countries. His Majesty declared that he had observed a strict neutrality in the present war on the continent, and uniformly abstained from any interference with respect to the internal affairs of France; but that it was impossible for him to see, without the most serious uneasiness, the strong and increasing indications which appeared there, of an intention to excite disturbances in other countries, to disregard the rights of neutral nations, and to pursue views of conquest and aggrandisement, as well as to adopt, towards his allies, the States General, measures which are neither conformable to the laws of nations, nor to the positive stipulations of existing treaties. Under all these circumstances, he felt it to be his indispensable duty to have recourse to those means of prevention and internal defence with which he was entrusted by law; and that he had also thought it right to take steps for making some augmentation of his naval and military force, being persuaded that these exertions were necessary in the present state of affairs, and are best calculated both to maintain internal tranquillity, and to render a firm and temperate conduct effectual for preserving the blessings of peace. In the conclusion of the speech, His Majesty ex-

pressed the great pleasure he felt in mentioning the brilliant successes of the British arms in India, under the able conduct of Marquis Cornwallis, which had led to the termination of the war, by an advantageous and honorable peace; and which, from their tendency, promised to secure the future tranquillity of the British dominions in that part of the world. After directing the attention of parliament to such measures as might appear necessary for the future government of those valuable possessions, and to secure the important advantages which might be derived from them to the commerce and revenue of this country, the speech concluded with recommending to parliament to adopt such measures as might be necessary under the present circumstances, of enforcing obedience to the laws, and for repressing every attempt to disturb the peace and tranquillity of these kingdoms. "In endeavouring," added His Majesty, "to preserve and to transmit to posterity, the inestimable blessings which, under the favor of Providence, you have yourselves experienced, you may be assured of my zealous and cordial co-operation; and our joint efforts will, I doubt not, be rendered completely effectual, by the decided support of a free and loyal people."—The address was moved by Sir James Saunderson, the Lord Mayor of London, and seconded by Mr. Wallace.—Mr. Fox, after some general observations, and the usual apology of considering the king's speech as that of the ministers, declared it to be his firm opinion and belief, that every fact asserted in the speech was false, and all its insinuations unfounded; that no insurrection existed; and that the alarm, whatever it might be, was not occasioned by any actual circumstances that could reasonably justify apprehensions, but by the artful designs and practices of ministers. He concluded his speech with an amendment to the address, which merely proposed, that the house should enter into an immediate examination of the facts which were stated in His Majesty's speech, as the causes for assembling the parliament.—The amendment was opposed by Mr. Windham, Mr. Dundas, Mr. Burke, Mr. Anstruther, the Attorney-General, Sir John Scott, the Solicitor-General, and Sir John Mitford: it was supported by Mr. Grey, Mr. Sheridan, Mr. Thomas Grenville, and Mr. Erskine.

Mr. SHERIDAN said, that though what had been said by his honorable friend fully expressed his opinions, yet he could not prevail upon himself on the present occasion to be wholly silent. The honorable secretary (Mr. Dundas) had in a manner called upon every member that night to make his probation, to avow his political creed. He had stated as a great acquisition the declarations which had been made on every side of attachment to the constitution. Till the proclamation was issued, that attachment had never been called in question.

He believed that there never existed a constitution so dear to the generality of the people. So strong was his persuasion of this, that if a convention were nominated by the free vote of every man in the country, for the purpose of framing a government, he firmly believed they would express no other wish than for the constitution which had been transmitted to us by the virtue of our ancestors, and would retain the form, the substance, and principles of that constitution. But he trusted that there existed in this country a firm set of men, who would not suffer the errors and abuses of that constitution to be held as sacred as the constitution itself. The imputation contained in the speech, and to which he regretted that an honorable friend of his had subscribed, he considered as highly unjust. It was the crown preferring a bill of indictment against the loyalty of the people. That bill was not a true one: if there were really any seditious persons in this country, who wished to overturn the constitution, their numbers were as small as their designs were detestable. Ministers themselves had created the alarm, and it was the duty of that house, before they should proceed farther, to go into an inquiry respecting the circumstances which were alleged as the ground of that alarm.—Should they rely upon the information of ministry, or act in consequence of that information, when there was reason to think that they had themselves forged the plot? He hoped it was not understood that those who rejoiced in the revolution in France likewise approved of all the subsequent excesses. That indeed would be a very unfair mode of reasoning. The honorable secretary had read an address to the convention, signed by five thousand persons in this country, but which unfortunately had got only one name affixed to it. As to the other address which he had mentioned, the address from a society at Rochester, it appeared to be a clumsy joke upon the convention, as it afterwards turned out

that no such society really existed. The formidable band of republicans, who had been mentioned to exist in this country seemed to be men in buckram. The manner in which the addresses from this country had been received by the convention, certainly argued on their part bad dispositions, but was no proof of treacherous designs. But it had been said, would not the description of men who had been represented as entertaining seditious views, wish for a French army to be introduced into this country? Such was his idea of the character of Englishmen, that he should take upon him to assert, that were but one French soldier to land upon our coast upon the idea of effecting any change in our government, every hand and heart in the country would be roused by the indignity, and unite to oppose so insulting an attempt. Of the riot at Salisbury the honorable gentleman had been completely misinformed, no such riot had existed; and that at Dundee was soon quelled without calling in the military. But what had been done since the militia had been called out? Soldiers brought into the vicinity of the metropolis, and the Tower fortified; and all this, because there had been a riot at Dundee in Scotland. No such measure had been taken in Scotland when the riot had happened. As to the honorable gentleman's popularity, he was glad that he now prized it more than he had done last year; but he ought not to wonder that it had been diminished, when he reflected that Scotland had in vain petitioned for six years for a reform in parliament. He should take no other notice of his reflections on those whom he represented as having taken pains to deprive him of his popularity, than by saying, that if he wished to know who was that person who had deprived him of his popularity in Scotland, he should answer, it was Mr. Secretary Dundas himself.

As to the question of a war, he should vote that English minister to be impeached, who should enter

into a war, for the purpose of re-establishing the former despotism in France, who should dare, in such a cause, to spend one guinea, or spill one drop of blood. A war in the present moment he considered ought only to be undertaken on the ground of the most inevitable necessity. He did not consider the opening of the Scheldt as a sufficient ground for war, nor did he believe that the Dutch would on this account apply to this country for its hostile interference, unless they had previously received instructions for the purpose.

The house divided ; for the address 290 ; for the amendment 50.

DECEMBER 14.

ADDRESS ON THE KING'S SPEECH.

The Lord Mayor brought up the report of the address agreed upon the preceding night. It was read a first time. On the second reading, when the clerk came to a part of it containing a contingent probability of our being involved in a war, Mr. Fox rose, and after a long speech concluded by moving an amendment to the address—“ Trusting that your Majesty will employ every species of negotiation to prevent the calamities of war, that may be deemed consistent with the honor and dignity of the British nation.”

Mr. SHERIDAN seconded the amendment, which, if adopted, would still, he believed, rescue the country from a war. Administration had been uniformly ignorant of the affairs of France. If they had not been, they might have prevented the present alarm, and have saved the life of the unfortunate King of France. Peace, if peace could be obtained, he wished by all means. If it could not be obtained, he should vote for vigorous war, not a war of shifts and scraps, of timid operation or protracted effort, but a war conducted with such energy, as shall evince to the world that the nation was fighting for its dearest and most invaluable privileges.

The amendment was negatived.

DECEMBER 15.

**MR. FOX'S MOTION FOR SENDING A MINISTER
TO PARIS, TO TREAT WITH THE PROVISIONAL
GOVERNMENT OF FRANCE.**

Mr. SHERIDAN began with observing that it had not been his intention to have said a word on the present question, and indeed he had been able to attend only a part of the debate; the substance of the motion had been discussed in the debate of yesterday, and his right honorable friend had given notice, that he should make this motion merely to record on the journals his protest against the proceedings which the house was so weakly running into; and this he (Mr. Fox) had done at a time when he deprecated discussion; because, as the house knew, he had not voice to defend his opinion. Gentlemen on the other side, however, had thought proper to raise their tone upon the confession of the inability of his right honorable friend to defend his arguments; and never since he had sat in parliament had he heard a question so perversely argued, or the mover of it so unjustly treated. This compelled him to trespass on the indulgence of the house, late as the hour was; and he must be excused for paying no respect whatever to the observation of a right honorable gentleman (Mr. Burke), that it was improper to bring forward these discussions in the absence of His Majesty's first minister! This was a tender respect to the dignity of office in that right honorable gentleman; but he must be permitted to say, that the representation of the country was indeed placed in a degraded light, if it was to be maintained that the great council of the nation was not, in this momentous crisis, a competent court to discuss the dearest interests of the people, unless the presence of a certain minister of the crown sanctioned their deliberations. But on what ground

did they regret the absence of the Treasury leader? Had there appeared any want of numbers or ability to compensate for this loss? What exertion that he could have furnished had been unsupplied? Had there been any want of splendid and sonorous declamation to cover a meagreness of argument? Any want of virulence of invective to supply the place of proof in accusation? Any want of inflammatory appeals to the passions where reason and judgment were unsafe to be resorted to? Unquestionably in all these respects, the Chancellor of the Exchequer had not been missed; in one article indeed they might be justified in regretting his absence. They had been pressed to prove the facts asserted in the King's speech, and in the proclamation; not an atom of information could any present member of the government furnish; doubtless, therefore, the insurrection was a secret deposited in the breast of the Chancellor of the Exchequer; and he had taken in his pocket all the proofs of the plot to assist his election at Cambridge.

Mr. Sheridan then said, that as he certainly should not follow the fury of the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Burke) through the fury of his general invective, so neither could he pursue him in that vein of lightness and pleasantry, by which he had contrived to make the gravest hour this country ever saw, appear to be a moment of peculiar mirth and relaxation. He would confine himself to the question, which he thought lay in a very narrow compass. His honorable friend had recommended, that before we plunged into a war, and drew upon the treasure and blood of the people of Great Britain, we should try, if possible, to settle the matter in dispute by negotiation, and shew to the people that we had so tried. This his right honorable friend had recommended as a duty which we owed to our constituents, be the character and principles of the power with whom we are disputing what they may. Was it credible that a proposition of this nature

should have been received with such heat? Reason and duty at any other time must have supported it. But the fact was, that the moment was unfortunate; the time was full of heat and irritation; natural and artificial government had thought it their interest to inflame this indisposition. Intelligence was expected of a catastrophe in France, which all humane hearts deprecated, and would equally deplore; in this temper, therefore, the public mind was worked up to a blind and furious hostility against France; and the dearest interests of our own country were to be risked at the call of a momentary enthusiasm, which, if not bottomed in sound policy and sound sense, was sure not to be lasting. Could there be a stronger proof of this temper, than the manner in which an honorable and learned member (Mr. Grant) had supported his argument. The most successful passage in his able speech, turned upon a passionate appeal to the pride and dignity of the English nation. He thinks proper to assume, that any thing like negotiation at present, would be a petition for mercy and forbearance from the French nation: and then he triumphantly exclaimed, with a triumphant cry, acknowledging the excellence of his argument, "Draw your petition, and where is the man, with a British heart within his bosom, who will sign it!" What unfairness is this! said Mr. Sheridan; and how can a man of his abilities stoop to a trick of argument which he must despise. Petition! ridiculous! Was there no mode between nations of demanding explanation for an injury given or meditated, but by petition? Did we petition the court of Spain in the affair of Nootka Sound? Did we petition France in the dispute respecting this very Holland in 1787? Or did the learned gentleman believe that, notwithstanding these instances, there was something so peculiarly meek, pliant, and bending in the character of the first minister, that it was quite impossible for him to assume a lofty tone or a haughty air

for any purpose? The case of Russia, however; Mr. Sheridan ridiculed and excepted. To judge by that alone, he admitted that the learned gentleman might be justified in apprehending that every menace of this government was to end in an act of meanness; that, whenever he saw the minister in the attitude of threatening, he might expect to see him in the act of conceding; and that, if he armed, it was in order to petition for mercy. Without this inference from the past conduct of the administration, the general argument was idle, and all the proud acclamations it had produced were wholly thrown away.

Mr. Sheridan next adverted to the declaration of Mr. Windham, that as he was of opinion that moral propriety prohibited our treating or having any intercourse with France, he had rather, if it ever took place, that it should be matter of necessity, and not of choice. This Mr. Sheridan treated as a sentiment not consistent with the usual precision of understanding which characterized that honorable gentleman. It was admitted that some time or other we must treat with the French, for eternal war or the extirpation of the nation was not yet avowed by any one. Necessity then was to be looked to, to give us a moral excuse, and whence was that necessary to arrive? from defeat, from discomfiture, from shame and disgrace. Happy prospect to look to, which would excuse us as it did the Duke of Saxe Teschen in his glorious retreat from the contamination of treating with this nation of robbers and murderers, as they are stiled. Happy, dignified opportunity to treat, when we should be completely at their mercy. Unquestionably we should then be justified, and certainly we should be undone: but the honorable gentleman argued as if this case of necessity, through defeat, could alone justify us in negotiating with such a foe, what! did he not perceive that an equal necessity might arise from

our success? We went to war for a specific object—the minister avowed and explained that object.

Admit that we are victorious and obtain it—is not the war to cease when the object of it is obtained? And if to cease, how but by some intercourse or agreement of some sort or other? Here there would be a situation in which negotiation must arise, not from necessity and defeat, but from victory and justice, all nicety and strained morality, and meek dignity, therefore about the thing itself was trifling; and as to waiting that time might operate, he did not conceive that if that time was to be spent in war and blows, much advance would be made in the spirit of conciliation. In stating the question this way, Mr. Sheridan said, he argued on the declared grounds which His Majesty's speech and the ministers gave for the war; for if he were to argue on the ground on which the war was urged with such impassioned and popular eloquence by other gentlemen, in that case he must despair of ever seeing peace return to the earth. With them was the motive to keep faith with our allies? Was the object to preserve Holland? Or to resent the incendiary decree of the National Convention?—Nothing like it through all their speeches; they scarcely deigned to mention such little and limited purposes. No—their declared object was to avenge all the outrages which have been committed in France, to reinstate, if possible, all that has been overthrown, to exterminate the principles and the people who preach the principles which they reprobate. As Philip demanded the orators of Athens to be delivered up to him as his most formidable enemies, these gentlemen must have all the democratic metaphysicians of France extirpated, or they cannot sleep in their beds. In short, the whole bearing of the arguments and instigations they used to rouse the house to hostility, went to advise a war which never was to cease, but in the total overthrow of the French republic, and the extermination of all

who had supported it. Was the house, was the country ready to vote a war for such an object, and on such principles? We were told that we must not differ with the allied powers, with whom we were in future to co-operate. Were we then to make a common cause in the principles, and for the purposes for which these despots associated? Were the free and generous people of England ready to subscribe to the Duke of Brunswick's manifesto? That hateful outrage on the rights and feelings of human nature; that wretched issue of impotent pride, folly and humanity; that proclamation which had steeled the heart and maddened the brain of all France; which had provoked those it had devoted to practise all the cruelties it had impotently threatened to inflict, which had sharpened the daggers of the assassins of the 2d of September, which had whetted the axe now suspended over the unfortunate monarch;—was the nation ready to subscribe to this absurd and detestable rhapsody? An honorable officer (Sir James Murray) had attempted to defend his performance,—but how? By denying that it intended what it professed and threatened. From a British officer of his character and understanding, a different defence might be expected; the honorable baronet had given instances where the conduct of the Prussian army contradicted the spirit of their manifesto;—what instances, on the contrary side, might be adduced, he would not then discuss. One case alone had been sufficient to decide him as to the true spirit of the league. The brutal rigour with which La Fayette had been treated: whatever else he was, he was a brave man, and he was in their power. The use they had made of that power sufficiently shewed how they would have treated others, whom they might well consider as entitled to ten-fold enmity. The worthy baronet, concluded Mr. Sheridan, thinks they never meant to carry their proclamation into execution; I thank God they never had

the opportunity. He proceeded to reprobate the idea of Great Britain engaging in the war on the principles of the allies; and yet how difficult was it to co-operate in their efforts, yet disconnect their motives and their ends! This was a serious consideration for parliament. The question was not merely whether we should go to war or not, but on what principles, to what end, and pledged to what confederacy we should go to war. For his part, he had declared, and, he hoped, with sufficient frankness and fairness, that, if war must be, the defence of the country and its constitution would be the single consideration in his mind! And for that purpose he would support the executive government, in whatever hands His Majesty placed it. But in this declaration he referred to a war undertaken on the necessity, and directed to the objects stated by His Majesty and his ministers. He did not refer to the crusade of chastisement and vengeance, which the zeal of some gentlemen recommended, and the clamor of the house seemed so ready to adopt. He would never consent that one English guinea should be spent, or one drop of British blood be shed, to restore the antient despotism of France—that bitterest foe that England ever knew. Sooner than support such objects, or such a project, he would rather violate the proud feelings which he shared in common with the house, and petition for peace, with any concession, and almost by any sacrifice; but he trusted no such dilemma impended. The real object of the war was one thing—the fiery declaration which was to whet our valour was another. Mr. Sheridan now adverted to the strange situation in which the house might bring itself, by indulging and encouraging this furious spirit of declamation, against the meanness and infamy of holding any sort of treaty and intercourse with France. It was in the first place a libel on His Majesty's speech, and upon our own address. His Majesty had encouraged us to hope, that notwithstanding

his armament, he might yet procure to us the blessing of peace ; and we have thanked and encouraged him in his gracious intention. How was this to be achieved ? Disputes and cause of complaint existing, without some sort of communication, it was impossible. How was this to be carried on—was there any sort of dumb crambo, by which the parties might come to understand each other ; and yet the form of negociation be slipt from, and the moral dignity of Great Britain be preserved ?

A right honorable gentleman, indeed, (Mr. Burke) had warned the house to be tender of advising His Majesty in the exercise of his prerogative ; yet he himself had actually usurped the first prerogative of the crown ; and in contradiction to the King's express declaration, declared the nation to be actually at war ; but what was to be said, if, after all this, the Minister, when returning to his seat in the house, should bring us the happy intelligence, that in consequence of explanation and treaty, the calamities of war were actually averted ! Mr. Sheridan asserted peremptorily, that at the very moment in which the house was urged to a flame at the idea of our stooping to the contamination of treating with France, the minister was actually negotiating, not only through Holland, but directly with agents from the French executive council. Should his efforts be successful, observe how you must treat him on his return : if he should tell you that a temperate explanation has taken place ; that the French had abandoned all idea of attacking our ally ; that they have rescinded the incendiary decrees and declarations which had countenanced the disaffected in England, and that this peaceful and prosperous country might return to that state of applauded neutrality which we have just thanked His Majesty for adhering to, this we must answer, “ go, thou mean wretch, thou betrayer of the pride and dignity of the crown and of the nation, thou contaminated man, debased by intercourse with the agents

of robbers, ruffians, murderers, and atheists—we only dissembled when we applauded your neutrality, we detest your peace, and we meant to dupe our sovereign when we called on him to preserve it.” Would the house make this answer, should such happy intelligence be brought them, and will they own that they played the hypocrite in their address to their King? Mr. Sheridan next took notice of the argument of the inutility of any negociation, the French having ordered Dumourier to open the Scheldt. He stated the dates, by which it appeared that that order was given before our declaration, that we would support the States General, could have been known in Paris. Why had no representation been made to France on that subject? A similar circumstance had occurred in 1785, when the Emperor seized the Scheldt. The determination of the French to support the Dutch, their then ally, was subsequently made known to him; negociation ensued, and he abandoned his project. Lastly, Mr. Sheridan stated the various grounds on which he thought if war must be the event, that preparations should be instant and vigorous. He then took notice of the sneer of an honorable gentleman, when he asked whether his right honorable friend (Mr. Fox) would be the ambassador to Paris? He declared, that from the commencement of the revolution, he had been of opinion that if there had been a statesman-like administration, they would have considered the post of minister at Paris as the situation which demanded the first and ablest talents of the country. Happy, he believed, it would have been for both countries, and for human nature itself, if such had been the opinion of government in this country; and highly as he valued his right honorable friend, unparalleled as he thought his talents were, he should not have hesitated to have declared, that as minister in Paris there was scope and interest for the greatest mind that ever warmed a human bosom. The French had been uniformly partial, and even prejudiced in fa-

vor of the English. What manly sense, what generous feeling, communicating with them, might have done ; and above all, what fair truth and plain dealing might have effected, he believed it was not easy to calculate ; but the withholding all these from that nation in our hollow neutrality, he was sure, was an error which would be for ever to be lamented. He concluded, with a reference to Lord Sheffield's declaration, that he was ashamed of the enthusiasm that he had once felt for Mr. Fox. This declaration he treated with the indignant zeal which friendship demanded. The according chorus of the noble band, who, in spite of the efforts of clamor and power, have surrounded the standard of the champion of the constitution, testified how little they valued the desertion of this noble lord.

The motion was negatived.

DECEMBER 20.

SUPPLY.

Mr. Hobart brought up the report from the Committee of Supply, granting 25,000 seamen, including marines, for the service of the present year.

Mr. SHERIDAN observed, that there were now about to be voted 9000 men more than we had for the service of the last year. He did not rise to oppose that vote, although if it were only for a decent respect hitherto uniformly paid to the representatives of the people, something like explanation ought to have been given, but to express his hearty concurrence, because, he believed, the general aspect of foreign affairs, and the necessity of guarding against foreign enemies, required the augmentation. He would even have voted a greater number of seamen, had the minister proposed it ; because, though he deprecated war, yet should that hateful necessity arrive, he was decidedly of opinion, that, being once engaged in it, and contemplating the objects with which our enemy would undoubtedly pursue it, it

became this nation at once to provide, as far as human prudence and effort could provide, that the war, if at all events we were to have a war, should not be a languishing and protracted war, or ineffectual to the end for which it was undertaken. If such were to be the event, he had no doubt but that government would receive the unanimous support of the house to every proposition tending to give vigor and effect to the operations of war; yet he earnestly hoped that it was still a practicable measure to preserve peace. It was under that impression the house were now voting this armament. After all he had heard in former debates, he could not but congratulate the house and his country on the prospect of peace, which the present vote authorised him to indulge. It proved, at least, that those who had proscribed peace, who had peremptorily declared the country to be actually at war, were not very confidentially admitted into the minister's secrets, any more than they appeared to have very judiciously consulted the true interests of their country.—“ I repeat again,” said Mr. Sheridan, “ peace, if it be possible, consistently with the honor and safety of the nation; but if war, an united and instant exertion of the whole energies of the nation, and an unanimous support of the executive government, in calling forth those efforts for the defence of our country and constitution.”

Here Mr. Burke rose and interrupted Mr. Sheridan, conceiving he had finished. After explanation Mr. Burke apologized, and Mr. Sheridan proceeded.

He said he had certainly concluded all he meant to say directly on the question; but there was another point which he was confident it was in order to introduce, upon which, seeing the minister, for the first time, in his place, he had wished to repeat his opinion. He was convinced, notwithstanding the gross and indiscriminate abuse thrown out against every human creature bearing the name of Frenchman, that there existed in that country a sincere dis-

position to listen to and respect the opinion of the British nation. He alluded to the situation of the King now on his trial, and of his family. He was confident that the French nation was ill informed of the temper and feelings of the free, but generous and humane, people of Great Britain, and that if they could be in any authentic manner apprised of what he in his soul and conscience believed to be ~~the~~ genuine impression of the public mind on the subject, namely, that there was not one man of any description or party who did not deprecate, and who would not deplore, the fate of those persecuted and unfortunate victims, should the apprehended catastrophe take place, he was confident that such a conviction might produce a considerable influence, he wished he could venture to say a successful effect, on the public mind in Paris, and throughout France. Mr. Sheridan pressed shortly his reasons for thinking thus, and said that among those whose hearts would be most revolted and disgusted by the unjust and inhuman act of cruelty he alluded to, he believed would be found all those who had been foremost in rejoicing at the destruction of the old despotism of France, and who had eagerly hoped and expected that to whatever extremes as to principles of government a momentary enthusiasm might lead a people new to the light of liberty; that however wild their theories might be, yet there would have appeared in the quiet, deliberate acts of their conduct those inseparable characteristics of real liberty, and of true valor, justice, magnanimity, and mercy. He would not take upon him to give any opinion as to the manner in which the public sentiment of England might be expressed on this subject, but he was more and more convinced, from the latest intelligence from France, that the opportunity ought not to be neglected.

Mr. Burke reprobated the words justice, magnanimity, and mercy, as applied to France. He observed, that the honorable gentleman who spoke last had, in some degree, reproached the house for

not being in the secret of the cabinet. What he probably did know, he was not bound to know, what was the disposition of the French ministers; nor was he (Mr. Burke) bound to know that of the English. The honorable gentleman had, in one part of his speech, recommended vigorous exertion if a war was to take place; and again, he said, in another place, he was glad to find the armament was so small, as proved there were still hopes of peace. These two sentiments did not appear to him to tally very well. He then came to the question, and said, he should have given his vote heartily for 40,000 men, if that number had been proposed; but he would not say any thing against the minister, as he must best know the number that would be wanted, and therefore he should give his vote for what was now proposed. His opinion was, that the disposition of the French people was dangerous to Europe. He knew nothing of the gentlemen of the phalanx, he should leave them to themselves. But as to the French, he must again repeat, he could not rely, as the honorable gentleman who spoke last desired, on the justice, the magnanimity, or the mercy of the French, particularly when they charged their King as a criminal for offences, for which that house would not call the meanest individual in the country to their bar to answer. The truth was, the King was in the custody of assassins, who were both his accusers and his judges, and his destruction was inevitable. He then returned to the question, and observed, that if the number had been 40,000 instead of 25,000, he should have given his vote more cheerfully.

Mr. Sheridan rose and claimed the indulgence of the house beyond the usual bounds of explanation. So perverse a misrepresentation of any member's speech, accompanied by such unwarrantable insinuations, had, perhaps, never been heard in that house. He would not attribute it to any ill purpose, or any ill motive, for he believed the right honorable member's ill temper had so run away with him, that he scarcely knew himself what he meant, or what he had said.

Mr. Sheridan, after explaining on other points, concluded with exculpating himself particularly from one accusation of Mr. Burke. He denied his having arraigned the vote of the majority on Thursday, as being untrue to their trust; for he maintained, that he did not believe there were two members in the house who had voted on the grounds, or the arguments, upon which he (Mr. Burke) had recommended the war; or rather, on which he had declared the war was actually begun. The minister

and the majority had consented to a war of necessity and defence, the object of which was ascertained; the honorable gentleman had insisted on a volunteer crusade of vengeance, of which no man could see the end.

The resolutions were read and agreed to.

ADDRESS.

Mr. Pitt stated some difficulties which he feared would occur in debating the address.

Mr. Sheridan was rejoiced to see Mr. Pitt so readily adopt the general idea. He recommended, however, the utmost caution and nicety in the manner of executing it, if our object was only a general protest for the sake of posterity, as seemed to be the right honorable gentleman's principal motive, perhaps it mattered little how it was worded, but as he was actuated by a sincere hope that some actual good might result to the living objects of our common apprehension; he conceived the manner of touching the subject required the most temperate and acute attention, to do any good we must look sincerely to our purpose, and suppress our passions; every thing like menace or insult to the people whose minds we wished to influence, must be avoided; it was a delicate subject, but when the question came he would speak out, and without reserve.

DECEMBER 31.

ALIEN BILL.

Mr. SHERIDAN proposed to exempt ladies from the restrictions of the bill; which, he said, would not defeat the object of it, and would shew that the age of chivalry was not gone in this country, whatever might have become of it any where else.

The amendment was negatived.

Mr. Sheridan, supported by Mr. Baker, proposed to exempt all who were resident in the kingdom before January, 1792, as the suspicions on which the bill was founded, were not said to extend but to those who had come into the kingdom since that period.

To this it was answered, that aliens who had resided in the kingdom for some time, were the persons with whom aliens, coming into the kingdom with evil designs, would most naturally connect themselves.

The report was received, and ordered to be taken into consideration on the following day.

JANUARY 4, 1793.

ROYAL BURGHS IN SCOTLAND.

Mr. SHERIDAN gave notice, that immediately after the recess, he would make a motion relative to the reform of the royal burghs of Scotland. As the subject was of a most serious nature, he wished Mr. Dundas to give as much attention to it as possible during the holidays.

Mr. Pitt wished to know how soon after the recess the motion would be made.

Mr. Sheridan replied, within a week certainly.

JANUARY 31.

HIS MAJESTY'S MESSAGE.

Mr. Pitt moved, "that the consideration of His Majesty's message should be adjourned till to-morrow." Mr. Grey moved an amendment to insert "Monday," instead of the word "to-morrow."

Mr. SHERIDAN allowed that there was one point in which all agreed, that no measures ought to be adopted without mature and deep consideration. That to-morrow would allow sufficient time for such consideration, he felt very much in-

clined to doubt. Mr. Pitt, however, had not answered those observations made by Mr. Grey, with respect to the necessity of further information; and indeed from a cursory view of those documents laid before the house, he conceived they contradicted what were asserted to be notorious facts. The question which the house had a right to ask, was, whether the papers in the possession of the members justified the possible case of a war? Indeed it could not be denied that a complete and ample communication of every particular ought to be given to the country, in order to convince the people, if a war should take place, that such a calamity could not be averted. With respect to the chasm stated by Mr. Grey, it was rather extraordinary that notice had been taken in Mr. Brissot's report of the amicable communication that had existed between the executive counsel of France and this country, at the very period in which the chasm occurred. Another material circumstance was, that the house was totally in the dark, with respect to the opening of the Scheldt.

Mr. Grey's amendment was negatived; the original motion was consequently carried.

FEBRUARY 1.

SEDITION.

Mr. SHERIDAN rose to give notice of a motion on a subject to which he meant to call the attention of the house on Friday next; namely, the sedition and seditious practices at present existing in this kingdom, and what ought to be the conduct of the house on that subject.

**MOTION BY MR. GREY, FOR PAPERS RECEIVED
FROM AGENTS OF THE FRENCH GOVERN-
MENT.**

Mr. Sheridan observed, that when the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Pitt,) said he had avoided going into a discussion on the contents of the papers, he meant to insinuate that his honorable friend (Mr. Grey) had gone into collateral matters, not necessarily connected with arguments, merely for the production of papers; but the insinuation was unfounded; for his honorable friend had not uttered a single sentence which was not closely connected with the object of his motions. The right honorable gentleman's refusal yesterday to say as much as he did that day, or to give any answer or explanation at all, could be ascribed only to ministerial arrogance. It was, however, some consolation to his honorable friend, that he was not the only person to whom the right honorable gentleman was so insultingly reserved; for it would appear he had concealed even from his colleague (Mr. Secretary Dundas) the circumstances of the conferences which he this day he allowed he had had with an unauthorised agent of France; for that right honorable colleague had, on a former day, declared, in language astonishingly perspicuous, "That he did not believe it was compatible with his belief that any thing more had passed between the French government and His Majesty's ministers, than what passed through the hands of Mons. Chauvelin."

FEBRUARY 11.

EXPORTATION OF GRAIN TO FRANCE.

Major Maitland moved, "That there be laid before the house copies of all orders given, on the part of our government, for stopping the exportation of grain to France, since the month of October, 1792."

Mr. Pitt said, that if the honorable gentleman thought he could prove that what had been done by His Majesty's ministers towards France, fairly provoked the aggression against this country, he might bring the subject forward; but he submitted to the house whether this was the time for that purpose; and he submitted also to the honorable gentleman, whether he thought that, after the house had received a message from His Majesty, it was fair to ask it to come to a conclusion against a fact stated in that message, before the house should take the message itself into consideration. If the honorable gentleman could prove any thing that would lead the house to a conclusion that there had not been such an aggression, the day on which the message was to be debated would be the proper one for that purpose, and the house would have the advantage then of hearing the arguments of the honorable gentleman;—but surely the house could not now proceed to the consideration of a point which belonged so immediately to the message from the throne, and the discussion to which that would lead, when under the consideration of that house.

Mr. SHERIDAN said, the right honorable gentleman did not seem to comprehend what the object was, which his honorable friend had in view by his motion; he did not now call upon the house to allege any thing, or to come to any conclusion; it had for its object only the ascertaining of a fact, previous to the discussion of His Majesty's message; and which would be material in that discussion either one way or the other. If they were told that no ships had been stopped, as had been alleged, they would be satisfied; because there would be an end of that part of the question. But surely the minister could not call on the house to vote for an address, or to vote any thing, without information on the subject. He did not know what sort of an address the minister intended to propose to-morrow, but the probability was; that it would be what addresses in general are, a mere echo of the speech: if so, the house would be called upon to declare, that there has been an unprovoked aggression on the part of the French towards this country, and that they have, on groundless pretences, taken measures of hostility against us. How was the house to know all this, unless the necessary previous information was granted? There

had been a rumor that a treaty had been concluded between the Emperor of Germany and this country; this was a material point to the discussion of the subject to which the attention of the house was to be called; and, therefore, he desired to know whether that was true, in order that he might be the more able to form an opinion for himself, whether these pretences, which were called groundless, were, in fair reasoning, to be deemed groundless—surely the house would not pronounce them so, before they had any evidence of any kind upon the subject. If the minister said “there is no such treaty,” he should be satisfied upon that point. If there was a treaty, then he would say that the house, before they voted the pretences of the French groundless, should see that treaty. It was said the French had proceeded against us without the smallest provocation. Now this could never be known by the house, unless they were fairly informed whether the ships alluded to by his honorable friend, had or had not been stopped under the circumstances he had mentioned; if the ships had not been stopped, he should think himself bound to vote for that part of the address; but if they had no evidence, they should not surely be so servile as to vote for what they had had no means of ascertaining to be true; he should, for these reasons, hope that the ministers would reconsider the matter, and give some information to the house.

The motion was afterwards withdrawn.

FEBRUARY 12.

ADDRESS ON THE WAR WITH FRANCE.

Mr. Pitt moved that an humble address be presented to His Majesty, to return His Majesty the thanks of this house for his most gracious message, informing us, that the assembly, now exercising the powers of government in France, have, without previous notice, directed acts of hostility to be committed against the persons and

property of His Majesty's subjects, in breach of the law of nations, and of the most positive stipulations of treaty; and have since, on the most groundless pretences, actually declared war against His Majesty and the united provinces. To assure His Majesty that, under the circumstances of this wanton and unprovoked aggression, we most gratefully acknowledge His Majesty's care and vigilance in taking the necessary steps for maintaining the honor of his crown, and vindicating the rights of his people; that His Majesty may rely on the firm and effectual support of the representatives of a brave and loyal people, in the prosecution of a just and necessary war, and in endeavoring, under the blessing of providence, to oppose an effectual barrier to the further progress of a system, which strikes at the security and peace of all independent nations, and is pursued in open defiance of every principle of moderation, good faith, humanity, and justice.

That in a cause of such general concern, it must afford us great satisfaction to learn that His Majesty has every reason to hope for the cordial co-operation of those powers who are united with His Majesty, by the ties of alliance, or who feel an interest in preventing the extension of anarchy and confusion, and in contributing to the security and tranquillity of Europe.

That we are persuaded, that whatever His Majesty's faithful subjects must consider as most dear and sacred, the stability of our happy constitution, the security and honor of His Majesty's crown, and the preservation of our laws, our liberty, and our religion, are all involved in the issue of the present contest; and that our zeal and exertions shall be proportioned to the importance of the conjuncture, and to the magnitude and value of the objects for which we have to contend.

Mr Fox moved an amendment to the following purport:—

“We learn with the utmost concern, that the assembly who now exercise the powers of government in France, have directed the commission of acts of hostility against the persons and property of your Majesty's subjects, and that they have since actually declared war against your Majesty and the united provinces; we humbly beg leave to assure your Majesty, that your Majesty's faithful commons will exert themselves with the utmost zeal in the maintenance of the honor of your Majesty's crown, the vindication of the rights of your people, and nothing shall be wanting on our part, that can contribute to that firm and effectual support, which your Majesty has so much reason to expect from a brave and loyal people, in repelling every hostile attempt against this country, and in such other exertions as may be necessary to induce France to consent to such terms of pacification, as may be consistent with the honor of your Majesty's crown, the security of your allies, and the interests of your people.”

Mr. SHERIDAN began with saying, that in one circumstance alone in the present debate, he felt

himself actuated by feelings and motives similar to those professed by the honorable member (Mr. Burke). The honorable gentleman had declared that he did not speak to support the Minister, for his case had been so perfectly made out by himself that it needed no support; but that he rose solely to repel the insinuations and charges of his right honorable friend (Mr. Fox), so he could sincerely declare that he had no thoughts of attempting to give additional weight to the arguments by which his right honorable friend had, in his judgment, refuted those of the Minister. He was provoked to rise solely by the insinuations and charges of the last speaker against his right honorable friend. Never had he before indulged himself in such a latitude of ungoverned bitterness and spleen, towards the man he still occasionally professed so much to respect. His ridicule of the smallness of the number of friends, left to the object of his persecution, ill became him of all mankind; but, he trusted, that however small that number was, there ever would be found among them, men not afraid upon such a subject to oppose truth and temper, to passion and declamation, however eloquently urged, or however clamorously applauded.

They were styled by the honorable gentleman a phalanx, and he styled the amendment of his right honorable friend a stratagem to keep this phalanx together, who had been otherwise, it seems, endeavoring to make up for the smallness of their numbers by the contrariety of their opinions; an odd description of a phalanx; no, he would never have given them that appellation, if he had not known the contrary of this to be the truth. He knew well their title to the character he had given them, and that a phalanx, whatever its extent, must consist of a united band, acting in a body, animated by one soul, and pursuing its object with identity of spirit, and unity of effort. His right honorable friend's purpose then, in this amendment, must have been,

as he had stated it himself, to reconcile those differences of opinion in other quarters to which he had expressly alluded, and not those which existed no where but in the imagination of the man who he believed had at least exhausted all power of splitting or dividing farther. But what suggested to him it must be a stratagem of his right honorable friend's? Was he a man prone to stratagems? At any other time he would trust to his candor even for an answer—for if ever there was a man who disdained stratagems by nature, who knew how to distinguish between craft and wisdom, between crookedness and policy, who loved the straight path, and sometimes even without looking to the end, because it was straight, it was the very person whom he now arraigns for craft and trick.

The next object of his sarcasm was, his right honorable friend's complaining of being so often misrepresented—"Pity," says the honorable member, "that a gentleman who expresses himself so clearly, and who repeats so much, should be so liable to be misapprehended." A pity, certainly, but not much to be wondered at, when misapprehension was wilful, and misrepresentation useful. The honorable member had only mistaken his own facility in perverting, for his antagonist's difficulty in explaining. But another grievance was, that, however misunderstood in that house, these same speeches were detailed with great distinctness and care in the public prints, while those of an honorable friend near him (Mr. Windham) were, as he declared, perfectly mangled and misrepresented.—There was no stratagem to be sure in this insinuation, but was there much candor in it? Did any one living know better than he who made the insinuation, that nothing could exceed the carelessness of his honorable friend (Mr. Fox) to the representation of his speeches out of doors? He believed he had never seen, touched, revised, or printed, a single line he had spoken in parliament in his life,

or caused it to be done for him. If either friends or judicious editors were the more attentive to the task, he thought they did credit to themselves, and an important service to the public at large : not less candid was it to insinuate a purposed misrepresentation of another member's (Mr. Windham) speeches. He claimed as long and as intimate a friendship with that gentleman as the right honorable member who appeared so tremblingly alive for his fame ; he thought equally high of him in many respects ; but he must in the frankness of friendship take the liberty of saying, that though no man had more information to ground argument upon, more wit to adorn that argument, or logic to support it ; yet that the faculty, which had been rather sneered at in his right honorable friend, namely, that of rendering himself perfectly perspicuous and intelligible to every capacity, was not the distinguished characteristic of that gentleman's eloquence. He was apt sometimes to spin a little too fine ; and, therefore, it was possible, without any corrupt partiality on the part of the reporters of the debates, that his right honorable friend's (Mr. Fox) speeches might be given with a superior degree of perspicuity.

He now proceeded to discuss Mr. Burke's other attacks on Mr. Fox ; he was charged with a dereliction of principle in having that day omitted to express his apprehension of the encrease of French power, be the French government what it may ; certainly Mr. Fox had not said one word upon that subject in his speech that day, but had he not in every one of his previous speeches in this session distinctly and most forcibly avowed and urged his sentiments on that head ? How pleasant to observe a gentleman, who begins his speech with taunting his right honorable friend for repeating things too often, reproach him in the next sentence for avoiding a repetition the most unnecessary he could have fallen into ! But if the reproach was on that ground extraordinary, it was still more ex-

traordinary that the general observation itself should come from the quarter from which it proceeded ! A dread of France it seemed ought to be a fundamental principle in the mind of a British statesman ; no alteration in her government can change this principle, or ought to suspend this apprehension, and who was the gentleman so tenacious of this creed ? The only man in all England who had held the directly contrary doctrine ; had he or could we have forgot that in his very first contemptuous revilings at their revolution, only in the last session of parliament, he had expressly scorned and insulted them as a nation extinguished for ever, and to be feared no more, and all in consequence of the change in her government ; that he described the country as a gap and chasm in Europe. * Their principles had done more, said he, than a thousand fields like Blenheim or Ramillies could have effected against them ; had they even got power by their crimes, like the usurpation of Cromwell, he could have respected or feared them at least, but they were blotted out of the European map of power for ever ! And the historian had only to record "*Gallos olim bello floruisse*"—yet this very gentleman, said Mr. Sheridan, having last year expressed all this with as much heat as he had this year expressed the contrary sentiment, arraigns my right honorable friend for having omitted to re-echo for a single hour his unalterable apprehensions of the power of France, be the changes of its government what they may.

It was still more curious to observe the manner of attempting to charge this circumstance on his right honorable friend. A book was produced, and he was proceeding to read a former speech of his (Mr. Fox's), as if he had ever once retracted his opinion on this subject. When the Speaker called him to order, the honorable gentleman did not seem to take the interruption kindly, though certainly he ought to have been grateful for it ; for never, sure, was man, who had a greater interest in discouraging the

practice of contrasting the past and present speeches, principles, and professions of any public man. Was the honorable gentleman ready to invite such a discussion respecting himself? If he were, and his consistency could be matter of regular question in that house, he did not scruple to assert that there was scarcely an *iota* of his new principles to which there was not a recorded contradiction in his former professions. Let a set of his works be produced, one member might read, paragraph by paragraph, his present doctrines, and another should refute every syllable of them out of the preceding ones; it was a consolation to those who differed from his new principles to know where to resort for the best antidote to them.

His next accusation against the mover of the amendment was, that he should have put the question on so mean an issue, as whether the actual hostile overt-acts committed by France, had been sufficiently explained and disowned to this country. This it seemed was contemptible; it was a war against the principles of the French government we were to engage in, and not on account of their petty aggressions against us; and, therefore, it followed, that it was to be a war to exterminate either them or their principles. The doctrine he thought both wild and detestable; but, admitting that it was right, the honorable gentleman must yet extend his scorn and his rebuke to the Minister, as well as to Mr. Fox; for though they differed in their conclusion, they had discussed the grounds of the war precisely on the same principle and footing. The honorable gentleman (Mr. Burke) differed equally from both, or more rather from the Minister, with respect to the professed motives and objects of the war, than from those who opposed the war. In this view he thought it most unmanly and unwarranted in the Minister to sit still and listen to these inflammatory rants, and even to cheer the war song of this honorable gentleman,

— quo non præstantior ullus,
 Ære ciere viros martemque accendere cantu.

VIRG.

when at the same moment he knew, and had even just declared, that the war was undertaken upon principles, and for purposes diametrically opposite to those upon which he suffered the house to be heated and misled by a spirit of vengeance and quixotism, which it was his duty to oppose and restrain.

With the same persevering purpose of inflaming and misleading, the honorable gentleman had read so much from the cruel and unjust proceedings against the late unfortunate monarch, and from various other French publications. This habit of picking out all the hot, wrong-headed, and disgusting things, said or written by individuals in France, would never be so constantly resorted to for a fair purpose. The compilation on this principle, avowed by the Treasury, and so often quoted by the honorable member, was an unworthy expedient, particularly as it had been done at a time when we still professed our hope and desire for peace.—What, if a conduct like this had been pursued in France? If, when the convention came to deliberate on war and peace, and to decide on the provocations alleged to have been given by our government, pamphlets had been given to the members at the door of the convention, containing extracts from all the various speeches of that right honorable gentleman since the first revolution—containing, in appearance, every thing that the scorn of pride, the frenzy of passion, and the bitterness of malice could have urged against them, from the very outset; and assuming the applause of his hearers to be the will of the government, and to speak the voice of the people? If to these had been added every furious and indecent paragraph that had appeared in our publications, and especially in prints connected with administration, what would have been our opinion

of such a proceeding at such a time? And what our indignation, if we learned that this had not been a work hatched in the dens and caverns of savage murderers and foes to peace; but that it had been produced under the direction of the executive council itself, and at the very moment that they were professing their desire of avoiding hostilities with us, and of promoting a good understanding? The honorable member would have been among the first to have quoted such a conduct in them as a new proof of mean hypocrisy and determined malice.

The address and toasts of an idle dinner of English and others, at White's, in Paris, was the next subject of the honorable member's alarm and invective. And to aggravate the horror of this meeting, the house was assured, that at it were drank the healths of Mr. Fox and Mr. Sheridan. The insinuation was scarcely worth noticing, nor should he have adverted to it, but just to shew how well entitled the honorable gentleman was to the credit he claimed for the accuracy of his facts and information. This anecdote wanted only one little ingredient to produce possibly some effect, namely, fact. The truth was, that neither his nor Mr. Fox's health were drank at that meeting; and it was a little unlucky that the honorable gentleman, who ransacked every corner of every French paper for any thing that would make for his purpose, should have overlooked a formal contradiction of such toasts having been given, inserted by authority in the *Patrioté François*; and it was the more unlucky, as the purpose of bringing forward this important anecdote, was evidently to insinuate that they were in Paris at least considered as republicans; while the actual reason given for not drinking their healths was, that, though friends to the reform of abuses, they were considered as expressly against all idea of revolution in England, and known to be attached to the form of the existing constitution.

The next specimen of the honorable member's

extreme nicety with respect to facts, was the manner in which he proved the enormous ambition of France, by the convention's having adopted a proposition of the Minister of Justice (Danton), that the future boundaries should be the Rhine, the Alps, the Pyrenees, and the ocean; and great stress was laid upon this proposal having been made by a person of such rank in the state. Now for the fact—Danton was not the minister of justice, and the proposition was not adopted by the convention. The right honorable gentleman might have recollected, that if Danton had been minister of justice, he could not have been a member of the convention; and he ought also to have known, that the proposition, so far from having been adopted, was scarcely attended to. But the ambition of France, and her aggressions against this country, were not, according to the honorable member, the only causes of war.—Religion demanded that we should avenge her cause. Atheism was avowed and professed in France. As an argument to the feelings and passions of men, Mr. Sheridan said, that the honorable member had great advantages in dwelling on this topic; because it was a subject upon which those who disliked every thing that had the air of cant and profession on the one hand, or of indifference on the other, found it awkward to meddle with. Establishments, tests, and matters of that nature, were proper objects of political discussion in that house; but not general charges of Deism or Atheism, as pressed to their consideration by the honorable gentleman; thus far he would say, and it was an opinion he had never changed or concealed, that although no man can command his conviction, he had ever considered a deliberate disposition to make proselytes in infidelity as an unaccountable depravity of heart. Whoever attempted to pluck the belief or the prejudice on this subject, style it which he would, from the bosom of one man, woman, or child, committed a brutal outrage, the motive for which he had never been

able to trace or conceive. But on what ground was all this infidelity and atheism to be laid to the account of the revolution? The philosophers had corrupted and perverted the minds of the people; but when did the precepts or perversions of philosophy ever begin their effect on the root of the tree, and afterwards rise to the towering branches? Were the common and ignorant people ever the first disciples of philosophy, and did they make proselytes of the higher and more enlightened orders? He contended, that the general atheism of France was, in the first place, no honor to the exertions of the higher orders of the clergy against the philosophers; and, in the next place, that it was notorious that all the men and women of rank and fashion in France, including possibly all the present emigrant nobility, whose piety the honorable gentleman seemed to contrast with republican infidelity, were the genuine and zealous followers of Voltaire and Rousseau; and if the lower orders had been afterwards perverted, it was by their precept and example. The atheism, therefore, of the new system, as opposed to the piety of the old, was one of the weakest arguments he had yet heard in favor of this mad political and religious crusade.

Mr. Sheridan now adverted to Mr. Burke's regret, that we had not already formed an alliance with the Emperor, and to Mr. Dundas's declaration, that he hoped, that we should ally with every power in Europe against the French; this appeared to him to contradict Mr. Pitt's declaration, and it was the most unpleasant intelligence that he had heard that day. If we made such alliances, our principles and our purposes would soon become the same; we took the field against the excesses and licentiousness of liberty, they against liberty itself. The effect of a real co-operation would be a more fatal revolution than even prejudice could paint that of France—a revolution in the political morals of England, and in consequence, the downfall of that freedom which

was the true foundation of the power, the prosperity, and the glory of the British nation. Sooner than entwine ourselves in such alliances, and pledge the treasure and blood of the country to such purposes, he had almost said, he had rather see England fight France single-handed. He feared the enemy less than our allies. He disliked the cause of war, but abhorred the company we were to fight in still more. He had a claim to call on the right honorable gentleman to join him in these principles: who were these allies, and what had been their conduct? Had he (Mr. Burke) forgot his character of the Polish revolution? "That glorious event had bettered the condition of every man there, from the prince to the peasant, which had rescued millions, not from political slavery, but from actual chains, and even personal bondage."—Who had marred this lovely prospect, and massacred the fairest offspring of virtue, truth, and valour? Who had hypocritically first approved the revolution and its purposes, and had now marched troops to stifle the groans of those who dared even to murmur at its destruction? These allies, these chosen associates and bosom counsellors in the future efforts of this deluded nation. Could the right honorable gentleman palliate these things? No. But had he ever arraigned them? Why had he never come to brandish in that house a Russian dagger, red in the heart's blood of the free constitution of Poland? No; not a word, not a sigh, not an ejaculation for the destruction of all he had held up to the world as a model for reverence and imitation! In his heart is a record of brass for every error and excess of liberty, but on his tongue is a sponge to blot out the foulest crimes and blackest treacheries of despotism.

Mr. Sheridan next argued on an observation of an honorable member's (Mr. Percy Windham), who had said, that we refused to make any allowance for the novelty of the situation in which France stood after the destruction of its old arbitrary govern-

ment. This Mr. Sheridan pressed very forcibly ; insisting that it was a mean and narrow way of viewing the subject, to ascribe the various outrages in France to any other cause than this unalterable truth, that a despotic government degrades and depraves human nature, and renders its subjects, on the first recovery of their rights, unfit for the exercise of them. But was the inference to be, that those who had been long slaves, ought therefore to remain so for ever, because, in the first wildness and strangeness of liberty, they would probably dash their broken chains almost to the present injury of themselves, and of all those who were near them ? No ; the lesson ought to be a tenfold horror of the despotism, which had so profaned and changed the nature of social men ; and a more jealous apprehension of withholding rights and liberty from our fellow-creatures ; because, in so doing, we risked and became responsible for the bitter consequences : for, after all, no precautions of fraud or of craft, can suppress or alter this eternal truth, that liberty is the birth-right of man, and whatever oppose, his possession is a sacrilegious usurpation. Mr. Sheridan concluded with adverting to the evident intention of the minister to render unanimity impossible, but said he should never retract his former declaration ; that the war once entered into, he should look to nothing but the defence of the country and its interests, and therefore give it a sincere and steady support.

Mr. Fox's amendment was negatived, and the address carried without a division.

FEBRUARY 18.

MR. FOX'S RESOLUTIONS AGAINST THE WAR WITH FRANCE.

Mr. Fox moved the following resolutions :—

“ That it is not for the honour or interest of Great Britain to make war upon France on account of the internal circumstances of

that country, for the purpose either of suppressing or punishing any opinions and principles, however pernicious in their tendency, which may prevail there, or of establishing among the French people any particular form of government ;”

“ That the particular complaints which have been stated against the conduct of the French government, are not of a nature to justify war in the first instance, without having attempted to obtain redress by negotiation ;”

“ That it appears to this house, that in the late negotiation between His Majesty’s ministers and the agents of the French government, the said ministers did not take such measures as were likely to procure redress, without a rupture, for the grievances of which they complained ; and particularly that they never stated distinctly to the French government, any terms and conditions, the accession to which, on the part of France, would induce His Majesty to persevere in a system of neutrality ;”

“ That it does not appear that the security of Europe, and the rights of independent nations, which have been stated as grounds of war against France, have been attended to by His Majesty’s ministers in the case of Poland, in the invasion of which unhappy country, both in the last year, and more recently, the most open contempt of the law of nations, and the most unjustifiable spirit of aggrandizement has been manifested, without having produced, as far as appears to this house, any remonstrance from His Majesty’s ministers ;”

“ That it is the duty of His Majesty’s ministers, in the present crisis, to advise His Majesty against entering into engagements which may prevent Great Britain from making a separate peace, whenever the interests of His Majesty and his people may render such a measure advisable, or which may countenance an opinion in Europe, that His Majesty is acting in concert with other powers for the unjustifiable purpose of compelling the people of France to submit to a form of government not approved by that nation.”

Mr. SHERIDAN said, that he was not surprised at the clamorous demand of the question, at the commencement of the speech of the honorable gentleman (Mr. Windham) who had spoken last. When his right honorable friend who had moved the question, had availed himself of his privilege of reply, it was to be supposed the debate was finished, and it was neither consistent with usage, nor fair and candid in the honorable gentleman, to attempt to say any thing more. Their friends, he must confess, treated them with a sort of French fraternity, and did them more real injury than their open enemies. The question, which the honorable gentleman had

represented to be speculative and abstract, particularly applied to the present situation of the French. As to the right of the country to interfere in the internal government of another, upon the principle of pure benevolence, it would be found to be a doctrine, perhaps more specious in theory than safe in practice. He understood, however, that it was admitted by the best writers, that no such right existed; but let us look to the consequences of this principle of pure benevolence. From pure benevolence the Empress of Russia interfered in the internal affairs of Poland. From the same consideration the King of Prussia had possessed himself of Dantzic and Thorn. It was pure benevolence which induced the Spaniards to commit all those cruelties which had disgraced their establishments in the new world. Were such a right of one government to interfere in the affairs of another admitted, it would be impossible to draw any line, or to fix its precise limits: but the honorable gentleman, while he so much reprobated French principles, seemed to have adopted their conclusions, and was now exactly defending that line of conduct which the French had proposed by their decree of the 19th of November. In justifying, on a former occasion, the riots of Birmingham, he had adopted the reasoning of Roberespierre, when he vindicated the massacres of the 2d September—that the persons who had suffered, had indeed done no mischief, but that had they not been crushed, they might have become extremely dangerous. It was not because they considered a negotiation as useless, that certain gentlemen who supported the minister, had disapproved of treating at all with France, but because they considered France as not negociable. Ministers, in what they had said of a proposed conference between General Dumourier and Lord Auckland, had stated that it was perfectly consistent to treat with a general in time of war. So then we were to go to war for the sole purpose of making an opening for negotiation.

The house divided on the previous question, moved by Mr. Jenkinson; ayes 270; noes 44; majority against Mr. Fox's motion 226.

FEBRUARY 20.

NOTTINGHAM PETITION FOR PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.

Mr. R. Smith read a petition signed by about 2,500 inhabitants of the town of Nottingham, stating, among other things, that as the constitution now stands with respect to representation in parliament, the country is amused with the name of a representation of the people, when the reality is gone; that the right of election had passed away from the people almost together; and that thereby the confidence of the people with respect to parliament was weakened, if not destroyed. The petition, therefore, prayed the house to consider of the proper mode to effectuate a reform in parliament, and suggested, as one part of a general plan of reform, that the right of election should be in proportion to the number of adult males in the kingdom. On the question being put for bringing up the petition,

Mr. Pitt opposed it.—The petition, he said, contained expressions so disrespectful to the house, and so irreverent to the constitution, that it appeared to him impossible that the house, consistently either with dignity or propriety, could allow the petition to be brought up in its present form, though he would not certainly think it right to refuse receiving any petition, whatever might be the object of its prayer, if expressed in proper and respectful terms.

Mr. SHERIDAN, after remarking that nothing was so likely to produce ill temper in certain gentlemen as referring to the principles they had formerly maintained, hoped the house would not imitate the example of those gentlemen. If they wished to be treated with respect by their constituents, their true course was to treat their constituents with respect. An honorable gentleman (Mr. Burke) had observed, that a society lately instituted for the avowed purpose of obtaining a parliamentary reform, was, as he trusted, come to the conclusion of its labours, as he had heard nothing of it for some time past. He could assure the honorable gentleman, that the society alluded to (the Friends of the People) was neither dead nor sleeping, but in the full vigor of activity. He (Mr. Burke) who opposed bringing up the petition, did not seem to have the same ideas

of virtual representation he had professed and published formerly. Having got on the subject of scraps, he would treat the gentleman who opposed bringing up the petition, with another scrap. On a former occasion, referring to the borough of Old Sarum, it had been said, that its streets were now only to be distinguished by the different colours of the corn that grew on the soil which it once occupied; and that its only manufacture was the manufacture of members of parliament. In the reign of Queen Elizabeth, a publication was laid before the crown lawyers as treason; they answered, it was not treason, but felony, for its contents were all stolen from other publications. Just so it was with the petition; its contents were all stolen from the declarations and speeches by which the Chancellor of the Exchequer had originally courted popularity. It was hard, indeed, if expressions that had been applauded when spoken in the house of commons were to be deemed inadmissible when adopted by the constituents of the house of commons. He referred to the strong language of the petition of the city of London, on the famous case of the Middlesex election, said, that His Majesty's present minister had given the model of associations for parliamentary reform, as it could make no difference whether resolutions were dated from the Thatched House, or from the Free Masons' Tavern; and concluded with supporting the petition's being brought up.

The house divided; for receiving the petition 21; against it 109.

FEBRUARY 25.

SEDITION.

Mr. SHERIDAN reminded the house that some time ago he had given notice of his intention to make a motion on the subject of the sedition or se-

ditionous practices said to have been then existing in this country. Since that time, he observed, several circumstances had occurred, which had induced him to postpone his motion from day to day. Since the date of this notice, war had actually broke out, and it did not appear to him proper to interrupt the important debates upon that great question, by the introduction of any other of comparatively less importance. But this had not been his only motive for delay ; several prosecutions had been commenced on account of the seditious practices, to which his motion was to refer ; and he had been of opinion, that pending these prosecutions, he ought not to bring forward any proposition on the subject. At present, these causes of delay either no longer existed, or were on the point of being removed ; the house had definitively decided upon the question of war ; and as to the prosecutions, many of them had been brought to a conclusion, and the remainder, he presumed, would be disposed of in the course of the present week ; he therefore thought that he might now, without farther delay, fix the day on which he meant to make his motion : he gave notice, therefore, that he would make it on Monday next. He begged leave beforehand to request that gentlemen would come prepared to discuss with temper the question which he should propose ; and he was confident that if they would display as much temper on the occasion as he should, there could be little doubt but they would agree with him in the conclusions which he should draw from the facts and arguments which he should state to them on that day.

Mr. Dundas rose merely to mention that he himself had fixed upon Monday next, and had communicated his intention on that subject to many members, for taking into consideration the report of the resolutions which he should have the honor to move this evening in the Committee on the State of the East-India Company. He hoped, therefore, the honorable gentleman would leave him in possession of Monday, and that any other day would equally serve his (Mr. Sheridan's) purpose.

Mr. Sheridan replied, that he understood the right honorable gentleman had fixed upon Friday next for the report of the resolutions respecting the East-India Company; and this it was which had made him (Mr. S.) make choice of Monday. However, as any other day would answer his purpose just as well, he was willing to leave the right honorable gentleman in possession of that day, and he himself would take the day after.

MARCH 4.

MR. SHERIDAN'S MOTION RELATIVE TO THE
EXISTENCE OF SEDITIOUS PRACTICES IN THIS
COUNTRY.

After the private business, the order of the day for taking Mr. Sheridan's motion into consideration was called for, and that gentleman was not present. An adjournment was moved, but Mr. Sheridan soon after entering the house, the order of the day was read.

Mr. SHERIDAN said, he begged a thousand pardons for having kept the house waiting so long; but he understood that the house were to be occupied in receiving excuses from members for absence on the day of call, and that the business would not be over until after six o'clock. He had been stopped too on his way by upwards of fifty petitions, which had been put into his hands, from the royal burghs of Scotland, respecting their internal government, and he should beg leave to present them to-morrow, and he hoped for the attendance of the house, and particularly that of the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Dundas), who had such a share in the former discussions upon that subject. He should now proceed to the subject of the motion which he intended presently to submit to the house, the object of which would be to appoint a committee to inquire into the truth of the reports of sedition in this country—reports, whatever some might think of them, he was sure were calamitous in their effects to this country,

and might become more so, if not checked in time. He should not attempt to prove, in this place, that there never existed any sufficient reason for apprehending the danger of the sedition, or that there had not been any act of insurrection in any part of the kingdom, to warrant the propagation of such reports: it was well known that there never was any thing of that sort of consequence enough to merit the description which had been given of it, or to create the alarm which followed; at least that was the opinion he had formed upon the subject. However, he perhaps might be obliged to retract that opinion in consequence of the proofs that might be brought forward before the committee of inquiry, for which he intended to move; if that should happen to be the case, he should be glad to see that ministers had only done their duty in spreading an alarm at a time of real danger, and should be glad to praise them for their vigilance, however he might deplore the necessity that gave it birth. When he said he should move for a committee to inquire into those things, he did not wish to say any thing upon the effect of such inquiry at present; his object was to know in what situation this country really was, and also to know whether the language made use of by His Majesty's ministers upon the subject of sedition, conspiracy, and treason, was not at least premature at the time it was uttered, and consequently, that nothing had happened in this country that could justify government in the steps they had taken, and the proceedings they instituted; at present, however, he had the satisfaction, as he really believed the house had, of thinking that these reports were ill founded: to remove all doubt, however, upon that subject, and to obtain complete information, were the objects of his motion. Parliament met early in December last, and they were called together in a very extraordinary manner; this of itself was matter of alarm to the country; for they naturally concluded that it would not have been so assembled, had

there not been strong reasons for it. We were then under the apprehension of a foreign war. From that very moment parliament seemed so taken up with that object, that they lost all curiosity with respect to the internal situation of this country: they took it for granted that every thing that was said by ministers was true upon the subject of sedition lurking in the country at the beginning of the session: they took it for granted, too, that every step taken to check it was just: this was a fraud upon the public, and the house ought to feel it so, for he really and in his conscience believed, that the alarm was spread for the express purpose of diverting the attention of the public for a while, and afterwards leading them the more easily into a war. He must now beg leave to observe upon the nature of the confidence which that house should place in the assertion of the King's ministers at any time, more especially when they were about to involve the country in the calamities of war, and of the effect of extending that confidence. When ministers came to that house, and called upon it to strengthen the hands of government, they were always bound to explain to that house the real motives they had for asking for that assistance, in order that the house of commons, as the representatives of the people, might be able to tell that people, whose lives and money were to be expended, the reasons why they were to be deprived of the rights they had before enjoyed; for he would maintain it as a maxim, that to strengthen the hands of government was necessarily, for a time, to weaken the rights of the people; and he would follow that observation up, that to strengthen the hands of government in carrying on a foreign war, without informing the people of the real state of our country, was making mere machines of them, was a conspiracy against the constitution, and was laying down a plan by which their liberty might be lost for ever.

With respect to the late supposed sedition in this kingdom, and of that supposed temper for insur-

rection, and of the lurking treason of which we heard so much by hints and conjectures, there were three circumstances to be considered, and three points of view in which the subject might be placed. The first was, that the danger in this country had been real: secondly, that the danger was not real, but that the whole was a false alarm, really entertained by government, the effect of a delusion successfully practised upon them; in which case the propagation, on their part, although unfortunate, was yet honest. The third was, that the whole was founded on a systematic plan, laid by government for deluding the sense, and finally subduing the spirit, of the people. It was, in his opinion, the duty of parliament to regard the subject in either of these three points of view; but he could not perceive any other in which it could be properly regarded; and he saw in all of them no way of proceeding with propriety but by instituting a committee of inquiry. Let us suppose, for instance, the whole evil was really felt as ministers had described at the beginning of the session. What then would follow? Most certainly the adoption of committee of inquiry, in order that a plan should be laid for our future safety. What was the next thing to be attended to, and the next view of the subject, supposing that ministers really apprehended danger, although in truth there had not existed any? Most certainly that a committee should be appointed to inquire, and that they might make their report upon the situation of the country, announce it to be in a state of safety, and calm the apprehensions of the public. In the third point of view, that supposing the whole to be a mere device on the part of government, for the purpose of leading the people more easily to a war with France, by persuading them that there are at this moment many agents in France, who are doing every thing they can to disturb the peace and internal tranquillity of this country; again he must say, that a committee should be appointed to inquire, in or-

der that the public should know the deception which had been practised on them, and that if the war had been so commenced, the people should be enabled to employ the means of declaring to the throne their sentiments upon that subject.

Mr. Sheridan observed, that we were at war with a great, a powerful, and hitherto victorious republic—it was idle to conceal the truth—and he added, that there was not in that house, or in this country, any man who wished more sincerely than he did that we might be able to check them in their career ; at the same time he certainly characterized them aright at present. He then came to the accounts which had been given, or rather the hints which had been thrown out by His Majesty's Attorney-General at the beginning of the present session of parliament, concerning the plots and conspiracies that were said to be formed in this country ; but had any thing of this been proved ? Not a syllable. But this made part of the system adopted by government ; and the public were to be alarmed at the apprehension of the progress of French principles, in order that they might the more readily be induced to go to war with the French ; and by the conduct of the worthy gentlemen of the associations the people of this country were called upon to revile the French in expressions, and to follow their system in practice, namely, to establish a government by clubs. He wished the house to reflect on what was likely to be the result of all this. The people of this country were accused of a spirit of disaffection ; many plots and conspiracies were said to be hatched ; and now he, in his conscience, believed there was not an iota of truth in any part of the charge to justify the apprehension which government expressed at the commencement of the session. What was to be done ? Institute a committee of inquiry ; for if there was any of this treason or conspiracy lurking any where, all he could say was, that it remained at this hour as undiscovered as at

the first moment when it was apprehended to be formed. These associations were formed, as it was said, for the protection of persons and property against republicans and levellers; and what were they about to do, and what in fact had they been doing? First of all, they had been employed to prevent the circulation of Mr. Paine's book, and the Jockey Club, and to bring to punishment the distributors of those publications—works which had for many months been spread all over the country by the connivance, as he might say, of His Majesty's ministers, and this too when one of those very ministers had an opportunity of reflecting on the impropriety of such publications, who had himself formerly indulged a disposition not to treat the high powers of this country with that respect which was due, and had, no doubt, repented of that temper, and thoroughly changed his sentiments. What care I for the King's birth-day—what is the King's birth-day to me? or some such coarse expression, had, he believed, been uttered by a noble duke some time since. What, he asked, had appeared of late to justify our dreadful apprehensions? He was not sure that ministers felt any alarm at the time that they were endeavoring to alarm the country; for how did the Chancellor of the Exchequer act? In the course of the summer he proceeded with due solemnity to take the weight on himself of the laborious office of warden of the Cinque Ports, and he conducted himself in that situation in a manner equally pleasing to his hosts and to his guests, and returned to town without any great apprehension of danger; but as the meeting of parliament approached, things became more and more alarming, until at last the whole country was said to be threatened with destruction. The whole of this was a panic created by ministers, for the purpose to which he had alluded before; this he felt no difficulty in saying, and he called on ministers to deny it: he was well convinced of the truth of it, that he would ven-

ture to affirm, that if all the magistrates appointed under the new police bill were to appear at the bar of that house, they would not be able to give one instance of the existence of that sedition which ministers had so often adverted to in calling upon the house to support them. All he requested of the house was, that a committee of enquiry should be appointed, or of ministers, if they said that such a committee was unnecessary, to confess that they themselves had been deceived upon the subject, and that what they advanced upon that topic some time since, they were now ready to retract. This, he said, was due to the public; for the people of this country ought not to be practised upon by fraud; they were a generous and a brave people; and he believed that if this country were to be invaded by a foreign enemy, it would only increase our energy and stimulate our exertion. He must therefore say, that, to accuse them of seditious motives, was highly unjust, as well as indecent. This panic had already had a great effect; and, indeed, it was much too general an impression to proceed from real danger; a general panic was always created by phantoms and imaginary evils. It had been always so in the panics of armies; for instance, he believed that there was not once to be found in history an instance in which the panic of an army had proceeded from real danger; it had always proceeded either from accident or some stratagem of the enemy. Indeed the thing bore evidence for itself; had the danger been real, there must have been a difference of opinion as to the amount of it; for while there was a difference in the size and character of the understandings of men, there must be a difference in their opinions; but those who believed any thing upon the tales of sedition, which he had before alluded to, believed every thing that was said about it, and that of itself proved its fallacy. There were numerous instances recorded, both in prose and verse, where nations had been misled and had acted upon

such false alarms. There were many instances in which a panic had been communicated by one class of men to the other.

————— Sic quisque pavendo
 Dat vires famæ: nulloque auctore malorum
 Quæ finxere, timent. Nec solum vulgus iuani
 Percussum terrore pavet: Sed curia, et ipsi
 Sedibus exiluiere patres, inuisaque belli
 Consulibus fugiens mandat decreta senatus.

His friend (Mr. Windham) had been panic-struck, and now strengthened the hand of government, who, last session, agreeable to a vulgar adage, “Rolled His Majesty’s ministers in the dirt.” At that period he would pull off the mask of perfidy, and declaimed loudly against that implicit confidence which some had argued ought to be placed in ministers. He now thought such arguments were impolitic, and no man was more strenuous for that confidence which he had before with so much warmth reprobated. Another friend, Mr. Burke, to whose doctrines Mr. Windham had become a convert, had also been panic-struck. He had been so affected, that he saw nothing but a black and clouded sky; a bleak opposition, where there was not a shrub or bush to shelter him from the gloomy aspect of public affairs; but he had taken refuge in the ministerial gaberdine, where he hoped for security from the approaching storm.

He had now dismissed the two first parts of the subject, and he therefore came to the question, whether ministers had spread those alarms, for purposes which they did not avow? It would be with great reluctance that he should put that construction upon their conduct; but there had been such encouragement given to reports of a certain nature, that he hardly knew how to avoid saying, that these alarms were created for very dangerous purposes; indeed he could not refrain from saying, that there appeared on the part of His Majesty’s ministers, first, a desire to inflame the minds of the people to

prepare them to go to war with France; secondly, an inclination to divert the public mind from the question of parliamentary reform, for the purpose of concealing the apostacy of certain individuals, who do not chuse to be put to the test, and tried by the public upon the standard of their own professions. As to the first of these points, namely, that of inflaming the minds of the people of this country, in order to prepare them for a war with France, Mr. Sheridan said, he need only refer to the speech of the right honorable gentleman himself (Mr. Pitt) who had said, at an early stage of the discussion of that subject, that he believed the public rather reproached government for supineness, than blamed it for its promptitude in going to war. This was a mode of bespeaking the opinion of the public; and he could not help saying it appeared to him, from that and other things, that attempts were made, and some of them, he was sorry to say, successful ones, to inflame the public mind with regard to France. He was surprised to hear it said by one honorable gentleman in that house, that the only consolation that could arise from the death or murder of the late unfortunate Louis, that it would rouse the indignation and animosity of mankind against France. This was a consolation arising from inhumanity, that he did not envy; he knew there were those who did not mourn that unhappy event. There were those who did not interest themselves to avert that misfortune. But those who loved freedom, or cherished liberty, must ever deplore the transaction, because by one act they had armed despotism, and given a fatal blow to the general interests of mankind. Such was his opinion now, and such it always had been upon that subject.

With regard to the other motive of ministers, namely, that of diverting the attention of the public from the question of parliamentary reform, he believed in his conscience that there was a design of that nature entertained by ministers in this country

which had succeeded for a time; but all this was temporary, for the people were not to be deluded for ever. God forbid they should! God forbid that a brave nation should be blinded for a long time by a few individuals; and that a whole country should be false to itself, and destitute of honour, because an individual or two had betrayed their character, and because a few persons were interested in propagating false alarms. That was not to be expected; indeed the deception was too coarse in its nature to last for much length of time; and the reports were too ridiculous about plots, conspiracies, and treasons, to be long credited. How stood facts upon this occasion?---A noble Duke (Richmond) had formerly been of opinion, that there was nothing to be seen but danger for want of a parliamentary reform; but he had so elevated himself of late upon fortifications of his own creating, and availed himself of his great power of discernment, that he was now able to discover plots, conspiracies, and treasons, under the garb of a parliamentary reform, or under any reform. The alarm had been brought forward in great pomp and form on Saturday morning. At night all the mail coaches were stopped; the Duke of Richmond stationed himself, among other curiosities, at the Tower; a great municipal officer too had made a discovery exceedingly beneficial to the people of this country. He meant the Lord Mayor of London, who had found out that there was, at the King's Arms, in Cornhill, a debating society, where principles of the most dangerous tendency were propagated; where people went to buy treason at sixpence a head; and where it was retailed to them by the glimmering of an inch of candle, and five minutes, to be measured by the glass, were allowed to each traitor to perform his part in overturning the state. And yet coarse and ridiculous as they were, these things had their effect with the public for a time, and they certainly did create a general impression

of fear.—Here Mr. Sheridan entered into a detail of many circumstances and stories, founded upon false alarms in several parts of the kingdom: first, when the alarm began, carts, waggons, and coaches, were said to arrive daily and hourly at the Tower, filled with traitors from different parts of the island, and ministers were applauded for their prudence and activity in the service of the state. Not one word of truth in the whole case! Not a being brought to the Tower---not a being charged with treason! The whole was a miserable fabrication to deceive the credulous. Suspicion, indeed, had been entertained; and he believed that many letters had been stopped at the post office, and he had no doubt that many of his were among the number; he said he did not wish to talk of himself, but as so much had been said upon the subject of correspondence with foreign powers, and as hints were thrown out in various channels, under the direction and encouragement of ministers, that he and others with whom he agreed on public subjects, held improper correspondence with other powers, he trusted the house would excuse him for adverting to himself, and saying, that if government should think it worth their while, he should not, on his own part, have the smallest objection to publishing every word in every letter he ever wrote upon the subject of politics. This he did to refute at once all the calumny which had been spread upon that subject. He had not the least doubt but that he might safely say the same thing of others who had been slandered in the same way. There was a paper drawn up by him, which he had no difficulty in saying he should be glad to avow every where, and on any occasion; and this he said in order that it might be understood that no apprehension of misconstruction should deter him from saying he wished it to be published; he was confident it was not repugnant to the principles of justice and humanity. This related to the subject of the trial of the late King of France. He said this

in hopes of defeating the purposes of those who were so malicious as to insinuate, from the most unworthy motives, that there existed a faction in this country connected with its enemies. He could have wished that there should not have been any necessity for his declaring, that he abhorred the principle of the decree of the National Convention of France of the 19th of November. Nothing should have deterred him from having written his sentiments upon such subjects. Nothing, he hoped, would deter ministers from publishing them at some future day, as there was no doubt but they had kept copies of them, and various other letters, at the post office.

He then came to take notice of the manner in which government had proceeded to create the alarm to which he had alluded. They had advertised Mr. John Frost and Captain Perry. The public were to look upon these two gentlemen as traitors. One hundred pounds each was to be given for apprehending them. One of them (Mr. Frost) was at this hour in this country, under bail, and ready for his trial, if he is to be tried; and the other was charged only with having printed, in the *Argus*, what the Chancellor of the Exchequer had himself delivered in a speech upon the subject of parliamentary reform. He said, he should not have mentioned these things, but to prove that great pains had been taken to carry on a system of delusion. There was another fact, which was too extraordinary to be omitted. A story had been trumped up, that there was a plan for taking the Tower by the French; after which, the whole of our constitution was to be overturned, and the Royal Family were to be murdered. At the head of this plot was to be placed that most execrable character, Marat, whom the French would have done well long ago to have removed, and which they would have been able to accomplish, had they not joined to him Robespierre, and others of a different character. This fiction was not enough; for we are told that there were certain people in pay by the

French, for the purpose of destroying as many of the people of this country as they could, and that attempts had been made to poison the New River. There was no doubt but that these things appeared now to be too ridiculous to be believed; and yet many gave credit to them, insomuch that the proprietors of the New River were obliged to advertise in all the newspapers the falsehood of that report. Was this no hardship, or did it not shew a shameful disposition to impose upon the public, and to work up the people of this country into fury against the French? In farther confirmation of this, he referred the house to the gross, clumsy calumny of the various newspapers which were published from day to day, under the authority of administration, where every thing that had any relation to the French was abused without mercy: by this the French were given to understand, for many months, that our court was at enmity with them. This also was part of the system of delusion which had been practised, in order to bring about a rupture between the two countries. There was one paper in particular, said to be the property of members of that house, and published and conducted under their immediate direction, which had for its motto a garbled part of a beautiful sentence, when it might, with much more propriety, have assumed the whole—

Solem quis dicere falsum
 Audeat? Ille etiam cæcos instare tumultus
 Sæpe monet, fraudemque et operta tumescere bella.

But it was on the authority of government alone that he rested upon, when he made these observations. An insurrection was said to be planned by corrupting the soldiers, and this turned out to be the sum of sixpence given for porter in Edinburgh: now what the scarcity of money might be in that country he could not tell; but this was very clear, that the system of corruption had not been carried to any very great extent. He then alluded to the

burning of Mr. Dundas in effigy by the people of Scotland, to which circumstance he imputed the soreness that the right honorable gentleman had displayed in the account he had given of the pretended insurrection in that country. It was said that Rotundo, a very notorious ruffian from France, had been in England, and no doubt for execrable purposes; but he was not sent here on a sanguinary embassy; but fled merely to elude the hand of justice. There were other stories afloat at the same period equally ridiculous, and ramified into various rumours. It was said that numbers were kept in pay; that they were drilled and disciplined in dark rooms by a serjeant in a brown coat; and that, on a certain signal being given, they would sally forth from porter rooms and back parlours, and finally subvert the constitution. Such were the idle stories with which for months the people have been amused. There was another circumstance which struck a panic into government, the planting the tree of liberty in Dundee. But this was like

• “Birnam wood coming to Duinsinane.”

This insurrection, as it was called, originated with a few school boys, the chastisement of whom, by their master, restored them to their loyalty, and prevented them from overturning the constitution. Some persons through a motive of indefensible humour, had written a letter to Sir George Yonge, informing him of an insurrection at Salisbury, when no such insurrection really existed. It was likewise said that there was an insurrection at Shields. The military were instantly dispatched; but the insurrection had ceased, and the seditious insurgents were voluntarily assisting in getting off a King's ship that had run on ground. He next instanced what had been deemed a seditious tumult at Yarmouth, which was equally well founded as what he had before noticed. If Mr. Pitt was not so stiff-necked and lofty—if he condescended to mix in

public meeting, he would not be apt to be led into those errors which were practised, he must suppose with too much success, on his credulity. In all the various accounts of pretended insurrections, he maintained that there was not the least proof of discontent in the public mind, or disaffection to government in any one of these, but that the whole arose from other causes. These things entitled him to say, that there was ground for inquiry into the subject, and that an inquiry ought to take place to set the public mind at rest upon such topics. He then touched upon the addresses transmitted from patriots in pot-houses to the National Convention, a long list of which had been compiled under the auspices of the Treasury. One of them was signed by Mr. Hardy, an honest shoemaker, who little dreamt, God help him, how near he had been overturning the constitution.

He next took notice of the effect of the system of delusion in the metropolis, and the hardships under which many individuals laboured in consequence of that system; where publicans had been told by different magistrates of the effect of their allowing any conversation upon politics in their houses; that if they conducted themselves in the least degree displeasing to the court, they should lose their licenses; and still farther, they were asked, what papers they took in. "Do you take in the Morning Chronicle, or Post?"—"Yes, Sir."—"Take care there is no sedition in it; for if there is, you are liable to punishment for distributing it to your customers." There was one very particular case in this respect. The Unicorn in Covent Garden, where a society had long met to discuss the propriety of a parliamentary reform. The landlord was sent for to Sir Sampson Wright; the man appeared, and explained the nature of the society. Sir Sampson Wright said, it was perfectly a harmless meeting in itself, but advised him not to suffer the society to meet again, because it might give offence to the

higher powers. So that a man was not to have a newspaper which he liked, or which his customers might be desirous of seeing; nor was a harmless society to be held, because it might be disagreeable to the higher powers. He was given to understand also, that every thing that had passed in his house for months was perfectly known to the magistrates, as well as that of every other public house, for they had agents employed for this purpose.

He then took notice of the expression of the Attorney-General at the opening of the session of parliament, of his having 200 cases to bring forward for prosecution only; a very few of whom had been at all brought forward, and many of those only booksellers for selling in the way of trade the Rights of Man, omitting all the parts objected to by the Attorney-General in the trial of Mr. Paine, and for selling Mr. Paine's Address to the Addressers, and the Jockey Club. Mr. Sheridan said, he had 200 cases to submit to the Attorney-General, and to that house, of real hardship sustained by innocent individuals, and which he should have stated this night, but that the accidental and unexpected diligence of the Lords had called for so much of his time last week on the trial of Mr. Hastings, as not to allow him to collect these cases, but which might be hereafter attended to and discussed in that house. Many of them arose out of the spirit of the alien bill in its nature oppressive—a bill, the exercise of which must soon incapacitate for ever any man from being a proper minister of a free country. It was impossible that ministers could know the proper objects in all cases to be sent away; and if they did not know of any such, they became constrained to send some away to save appearances, and to keep themselves in countenance. This reflection led him to take notice of the practice of erecting barracks all over this kingdom, also part of the same system, and tending, with all their other measures, uniformly to the point of despotism.

The next point which came to be noticed was, the mode adopted on the part of the Treasury, to discover persons who distribute seditious books. This was done by means of a circular letter all over the country, from Messrs. Chamberlaine and White, solicitors to the Treasury, to various attornies, employing them as agents in this business. This, Mr. Sheridan observed, was to the last degree dangerous; because it went to the effect of placing in a situation to be tempted, a set of men not highly distinguished for superior morality, and of making them derive emolument from the litigation, which themselves, not their clients, were to create. Many attornies, he said, had, to their honour, rejected the offer with scorn and indignation. The books chiefly to be noticed were, as he had said before, the works of Mr. Paine and the Jockey Club; he had no occasion to say any thing of these books; but neither these, nor any other books, could launch out more freely on the necessity of a parliamentary reform, than the speeches of Mr. Chancellor Pitt, and the Duke of Richmond; or more grossly against kings, than the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Burke) upon former occasions. To prove this, he read passages from the noble Duke's address to the county of Sussex, and to Colonel Sharman and the volunteers of Ireland, in which he asserted, that it was in vain for the people to look to the house of commons for redress, that they could find it only in themselves; that they ought to assert their right, and not to desist till they should have established a house of commons truly representing every man in the kingdom. From Mr. Burke's speech, on his motion for leave to bring in his bill of reform, he read a passage, calculated to represent the peers of the realm in the most abject, degraded state. He said, he was sorry that the report was not made to the king in council, of the conviction of persons charged with misdemeanors; if it were usual to make such a report, he should like very much to

hear the observations of His Majesty's ministers on the cases of some of the wretched bill-stickers, convicted of publishing seditious libels. When the seditious passages were read, the noble Duke might say, "he borrowed that from the preamble to my reform bill." The right honorable gentleman might say, "that expression was stolen from the speech which I made, when I proposed to the house of commons my plan for a parliamentary reform." Mr. Sheridan said, he wondered how these personages could bear their own feelings, when they knew that some poor wretches were lying upon straw in the gloom of a prison, for having published sentiments which they had solemnly professed in and out of parliament. The offence was the same in all, but mark the difference of the treatment;—punishment and a prison were the lot of the one set, whilst the others were honored with places and emoluments, and seats in His Majesty's council.

He then took notice of the principles of the society, of which Mr. Reeves was the leader, and of all others formed upon that plan. These societies were described by Mr. Law, in the letter which he published on the 24th of January last, in the Morning Chronicle, stating his reasons for withdrawing from that society; and stating, amongst other things, that they proceeded against republicans and levellers upon private anonymous letters; nothing, he said, could be more infamous than such a principle.

He took notice of a sermon preached before the house of lords, by a learned prelate, in which his lordship complained of the folly with which people had of late suffered themselves to be carried away by a spirit of discussion about the origin of government. The slavishness of this high-church doctrine, which discountenanced enquiry, could, Mr. Sheridan said, be equalled only by the want of charity, which appeared in another part of the sermon, in which the public indignation was directed against a particular description of men (Protestant dissenters)

who were represented as unworthy of the name of fellow-christians: He touched upon a publication of Dr. Tatham, in which he accuses Dr. Priestley as an accomplice in the murder of the King of France, and told him, that whatever pretension he might have to reputation for abilities, he must give up his heart, which could in no light whatever be defended.—Here Mr. Sheridan took notice of the disgraceful riots at Birmingham, and of the difficulties thrown in the way of payment of the money ordered by verdicts of juries upon trials for the damages sustained by these riots. But even this was exceeded by what had taken place in Cambridge, for, to such a pitch of insolent injustice had the system of political oppression been carried against publicans, that they were compelled to take an oath, that they not only would not suffer political disputes in their houses, but that they would give an account of the behaviour and conversation of every republican they might happen to know or hear of. All this was infamous, but it was the effect of the panic he had so frequently alluded to; it was owing to that panic that the Chancellor of the Exchequer objected the other day to the bringing up, and receiving of the petition from the inhabitants of Nottingham, stating the necessity of a parliamentary reform, a petition not half so objectionable as the Chester petition, which had been received. It was owing to that panic, that a right honorable gentleman (Mr. Burke) did not of late speak with the eloquence with which he used to command the admiration of his auditors. For now really the taste of his mind, and the character of his understanding was altered. It was owing to that panic, that another right honorable gentleman (Mr. Windham) had brought his mind to approve what his heart had for years before abhorred; he meant the erection of barracks. It was owing to that panic, that that right honorable gentleman had prevailed upon himself to support a minister, because he had a bad opinion of him. It

was owing to that panic, that a noble and learned lord (Loughborough) in the other house, had given his disinterested support to government, and had actually accepted of the seals of an administration he had uniformly reprobated from its commencement. If that noble and learned lord acted from the same principle of the right honorable gentleman, that of supporting an administration because he thought it a bad one, he wished to know what his opinion must be of its profligacy, since he went so far as to accept an office under it. But above all, it was owing to that panic that the right honorable gentleman to whom he had alluded to before had lost his fine taste entirely, and had become the slave of the most ridiculous pantomimick and contemptible juggling, and carried about with him daggers and knives to assist him in efforts of description. It was to this panic also, that the milk of the Christian religion too had lost its mildness, and a spirit of intolerance had renewed its fierceness from the pulpit. He adverted to the letter signed by Mr. Windham and others, and addressed to the Whig Club, in which they signified their intention of withdrawing from the Club. Mr. Sheridan represented this letter as an effect of nothing but panic; for otherwise a gentleman could never have thought of going such lengths in favor of Ministers whom he despised, and whom he could not trust, and against a man whom he affected to admire and respect. He never could have thought of withdrawing from a club, because it had nobly resolved to resist calumny, and called upon its members to rally round the champion of liberty against whom the shafts of calumny were directed; but who, the more he was calumniated, the dearer he must become to those generous friends, who were attached to him for his virtues and his talents.—When he found the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Windham) leagued against such a man, he declared in a very impassioned tone, that though he was convinced the right honorable gentleman was by nature

truly brave, he verily believed the panic which had seized him, had not only affected the clearness of his head, but also violated the integrity of his heart. He dwelt much upon the question of parliamentary reform, and shewed that he and his friends were blamed for having been true to those principles to which Mr. Pitt and the Duke of Richmond had found it their interest to prove false. He recommended it to his honorable friend (Mr. Grey) to persevere in his intention of making a motion for a parliamentary reform; but he advised him not to make any profession on the occasion; not to promise that as a man and a minister he would support a reform; nor to say that, unhackneyed in the ways of men, he would pursue only the paths of plain dealing and honesty; in a word, not to say that the times were not good enough for him, for all this had been said by a right honorable gentleman (Mr. Pitt), who had shewn that he was a stranger to the performance of the most solemn engagement, and that if he could not accommodate himself to the times, he would make the times accommodate themselves to him. He was sure, he said, that his honorable friend would never be found to resemble such a character; he had a lofty spirit, seated in a heart of honor; and what he was convinced was right, that he was sure he would inflexibly pursue. He concluded by making the following motion, and said that if it was adopted, he meant to follow it up with a motion for an address to His Majesty, praying that he would lay before a secret committee of the house all discoveries made respecting seditious practices, together with all information and letters on the same subject received or intercepted.

“That an humble address be presented to His Majesty, praying that he would be pleased to order such communications as may have been received, as to the existence of seditious practices in this country, to be laid before a committee of the house.”

Mr. Sheridan rose to make a short general reply. He expressed his surprise at the manner in which Mr. Burke had talked of the conduct of parties, who had long since stated that he was unconnected with any party; who had gone from the living whigs to the dead, and whom, having never quitted the camp as a deserter, he never suspected of returning to it as a spy. He had borrowed no manner of debate from new connections, having never once departed from his original connections and principles—conduct which some gentlemen might not be very willing to hear stated, nor think entitled to any merit.

The Speaker reminded Mr. Sheridan, that the indulgence of the house entitled him only to reply to points immediately applicable to the motion.

Mr. Sheridan said, the gentleman who opposed it, had said so little that was applicable, and that little tending rather to confirm, than confute the propriety of it, that he had nothing to reply to. With respect to any harshness of expression imputed to him, no affectation of candor should ever induce him to spare those whose conduct seemed studiously calculated to throw discredit on the principles he maintained, or the friends with whom he acted.

MARCH 11.

ROYAL BURGHS IN SCOTLAND.

Mr. SHERIDAN informed the house that he had received a great number of petitions from the inhabitants of the royal burghs of Scotland, which by their desire, he meant then to present. The first in order was from Glasgow; to which, he said, there were thirteen thousand subscribers: after having stated that the prayer of the petitions was in general for a reform in the internal government, &c. of the burghs, he moved for leave to bring it up. Leave was accordingly given, and the petition was

brought up, and read at full length. On the motion of Mr. Sheridan, it was ordered that it should lie upon the table.

Mr. Sheridan observed, that he thought it proper that this petition should be read at length, for the purpose of shewing the house what was its real object and tendency; but, as the others were precisely to the same effect, he should desire no more, for the present, than that their titles should be read.—The second petition which he delivered, was from the burgh of Lanark. It was received, and laid upon the table with the former.

Mr. Sheridan here remarked, as the delivering the remaining petitions would take up much time, and the house appeared to be impatient to hear Mr. Pitt on the subject of the revenue, and ways and means of the country, he would not deliver any more for the present, and the business of the budget should not be impeded.

After some private petitions had been presented,

Mr. Sheridan begged leave to take that opportunity, there being then a full house, to give notice, that he would on Monday fortnight make a motion, founded on the subject matter of the petitions from the royal burghs of Scotland; and he hoped, a right honorable gentleman opposite to him (Mr. Dundas,) would, in the interval, seriously turn in his mind the claims of the petitioners, who were complaining of great abuses, which were allowed even by that right honorable gentleman to exist, at least, in part; for the Lord Advocate of Scotland had last year moved for leave to bring in a bill, in which he was supported by the right honorable gentleman, for the purpose of removing an abuse, the existence of which was admitted by both. Why the bill had been suffered to drop, he could not pretend to say; but this much he would say, that the house, by what it had already done in

the business, was actually pledged to grant the petitioners relief, at least in that particular case. He knew many persons who trembled at the very idea of reform, would tell him, this was not the proper time;—in return, he would tell them, a measure could not be out of time which would remove complaints, put an end to divisions, and unite a whole people: such an union would be the more desirable, as the country was then embarked in a war, and stood in need of the united exertions of all its inhabitants. He trusted the right honorable gentleman would take such a part in this business, as would enable him to recover that popularity in Scotland, which some people, wickedly, no doubt, said he had lost; though he, himself, would have the world believe otherwise.

SUPPLY.

The house resolved itself into a committee of supply;—Mr. Pitt stated the expenses of the year, and the ways and means by which they were to be met, and moved resolutions accordingly.

Mr. Sheridan began with saying, whatever difference of opinion there had been, respecting the necessity of the war, or the means by which, consistently with good sense and sound policy, it might have been avoided altogether; yet, the country being actually engaged in it, the right honorable gentleman, he believed, had done but justice to the house, in assuming that his propositions that day, would meet with their unanimous assent; and if exertions was to be vigorous, undoubtedly the supply must be liberal. The right honorable gentleman had, however, called on the house to watch the whole of the business with vigilance, and even with jealousy. The call was not necessary to him (Mr. Sheridan,) for he had uniformly acted on that principle upon all revenue questions, and without apologising for an essential act of duty, he would always continue to do so. Under this impulse, al-

though he gave the minister credit for the fairness of some of his statements, yet he must frankly say, he had felt the jealousy recommended, much awakened by the very extraordinary and sudden appeal to the passions of the house, with which the right honorable gentleman had concluded his speech. There was little novelty in it, except the novelty of introducing in a day devoted to figures, all the arts of declamation. He had suddenly laid down his pencil and slate, as it were, and grasping his truncheon, had finished with an harangue more calculated for the general of an army going to storm a French redoubt, than a minister of finance discussing accounts in the sober hour of calculation with the stewards and attornies of a burdened and patient people. Whenever he saw exertion and eloquence so misplaced, he always suspected there was some weakness to cover in the subject itself. He was the more led into the apprehension by some very alarming hints the right honorable gentleman had dropped, respecting new connections still to be formed. It seemed, the expensive corps of 12,000 Hanoverians, were not the only foreign troops we were to pay. New subsidies and foreign mercenaries were announced, and in a manner that seemed to avow that government was adopting the general principles and views of the Austrian and Prussian confederacy, which he had hitherto flattered himself had not been the case, whatever had been the wishes and arguments of some individuals in that house. He had been in hopes the war was undertaken on the general ground of opposing the dangerous increase of the French power, and on the principle of never permitting this country, for a moment, to hold its independence at the mercy or forbearance of any other power on earth; but he was sorry to observe symptoms of adopting the contrary line now first appearing in the words and conduct of the ministers. He hoped he was mistaken—for whatever was said of the popularity of the

war, he was confident it was not intended by the nation to be a war of vengeance, that *bellum internecinum*, that crusade for the extirpation of opinions, and of forms of foreign governments, which some had rashly recommended, but to which the minister had hitherto appeared too wise to commit himself.

Mr. Sheridan agreed that Mr. Pitt had not overloaded our average income ; but he gave the most decided contradiction to his statement, that if peace had continued, or whenever peace was restored, there would be a balance, after paying the peace establishment and the surplus million, of nearly nine hundred thousand pounds ;—this, Mr. Sheridan said, was proved by facts and figures to be a most gross fallacy ; and nothing was so dangerous as buoying up people's hopes, and making them careless of the consequences of war by such delusions. He took the produce of last year, up to the 5th of January, as stated by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the papers on the table, including the land and malt tax, the total income of the year would be something short of 17,000,000*l*. This, said the right honorable gentleman, is 900,000*l*. more than necessary for a peace establishment ; and therefore, we might reckon on 100,000*l*. whenever peace should arrive. What a mode of arguing ! Ten years had passed since the American war, and never had this year of peace establishment arrived ! Not one single year in which our expenditure had been less than seventeen millions. Were we ever likely to see it less ?—Were rigorous reduction in all our military services likely to be the characteristic of a future peace ? and when that peace was obtained, was another ten years interval to take place before the establishments were to be affected by it ? To hold out such hopes was trifling with the country, and not following the open dealing which the minister called for and recommended. The improbability of our revenue continuing at its

present standard, was also a matter of serious consideration. The more general the war, the more would all foreign merchants be disturbed, and commercial capitals be withheld from their objects; and there was no town in Europe where this would not interfere with the trade and manufactures; and, consequently, the public revenues of Great Britain. Among the ways and means, he objected to nothing but the sum supposed to be forthcoming from the East India Company. This he dwelt on at some length, in declaring, it ought not even to have been mentioned, as it depended solely on the renewal of the charter. That important question ought to have been permitted to come hereafter, as it must come to the consideration of parliament, without any previous opinion having been in a bye manner obtained upon it, much less without government and that house seeming to have already accepted the premium which was to be the price of the charter.

Mr. Sheridan concluded with a long recommendation to the house, before they laid a new burden of a single shilling on the people, to enable themselves, by a rigorous scrutiny into all useless places, and reversionary sinecures; to look their constituents in the face, and assure them, that before they applied to their pockets, they had abolished all unnecessary expenses, and unmerited stipends. By doing this, they would not only bring to the public service large sums, wrung from the industry and labor of the community, but they would destroy the baits of corruption, and teach the government to look to its merits for its support.

Mr. Pitt's resolutions were put and agreed to, and ordered to be reprinted on the next day.

MARCH 13.

DUTY ON COALS.

Mr. Alderman Curtis moved "That the petition some time since on behalf of the citizens of London, praying that the duty laid on coals in the reign of Queen Anne, might be referred to a committee, that they might report their opinion thereon, as it should appear to them, and to the house."

Mr. SHERIDAN said, if it could be proved that no mode could be adopted to supply the loss of 130,000*l.* to the public, he should vote against the present petition, because he was sure we could not spare that or any other sum at present; but Mr. Pitt had said nothing that could lead to a hope that even when the war should be concluded, that this tax shall be taken off or modified; all he said, had tended to lay an eternal bar against it. If a committee were to be gone into, the objection of lessening the revenue might be answered by providing that the duty should continue during the continuance of the war. Mr. Sheridan made several other observations tending to inforce the propriety of committing the petition to proper inquiry.

The house divided, for committing the petition 35; against it 77. The house adjourned.

MARCH 15.

ARMY ESTIMATES.

In a committee of supply, the Secretary at War rose to move the several estimates.

Mr. SHERIDAN said, the argument that men, by any disapprobation of the measures of government, were acting against the interests of their country, when the marked misconduct of ministers was what every member of the house ought to reprobate, would be a plea for a general indemnity to ministers, however weak or wicked might be their conduct.

Support, with a vigilant observation of their conduct, was a support for which the present ministers would be as little disposed to thank any other gentleman as his right honorable friend. The support which they wanted was of another sort, lately described in the house—a support that should increase with their demerits—a confidence that should increase as they shewed themselves less worthy of it. When the Chancellor of the Exchequer lashed the errors of administration in the American war, which his right honorable colleague (Mr. Dundas) defended, he did not think that he was supporting the enemies of his country. But the sentiments of the right honorable gentleman were very properly changed with his situation. To say that ministers had not done all they could, was not giving encouragement to the enemy. It was to say, that whatever opinion they might have been led to form from the neglect and delay of ministers, the country possessed great vigor, and great resources, capable of being brought into action when ministers were made to do their duty. They themselves had admitted, that early in December they stopped the French supplies of corn, as a measure of precaution against an enemy in a state of preparation for war. Could they produce any reason to shew that it was not as proper to begin preparations of defence as to interrupt the preparations of the enemy? On the very first day of the meeting of parliament he had said, that if we were to have a war, it ought to be a war of activity and vigor; and had ministers but acted as they talked, so it would have been. But they seemed to have exhausted the whole spirit, to have unbraced the whole energy of their minds in declamation in parliament; and, when the season for action came, to have been incapable of acting. He hoped the lesson they had now received would prevent the necessity of another of the same kind. He trusted that they would not be found as backward in their naval as in their military preparations; and that if, as was reported, a

French fleet had sailed from Brest, there was a British fleet to meet it, whatever might be its destination.

The question was put on the resolutions, and agreed to.

MARCH 21.

TRAITOROUS CORRESPONDENCE BILL.

The order of the day for the second reading of the Bill for preventing all traitorous correspondence, &c. with France, during the present war, was called for, and carried after a debate. The Attorney-General moved, that it should be committed on the following day.

Mr. SHERIDAN said, he joined the worthy magistrate (Mr. Alderman Anderson) who spoke last, in hoping that by a vigorous exertion on our part, the war would be brought to a happy termination; he hoped also, that our ships may be out of danger, and he trusted he might safely place confidence in His Majesty's Ministers; that by their exertions, they would soon convince us, that the rumour gone abroad lately, that we were not able to attack ships under the French flag, was unfounded; he trusted, that whatever might be these rumours, the worthy magistrate would not be found to have been too sanguine upon that subject. Mr. Sheridan said, he did not mean to follow the learned gentleman (the Attorney-General) through all his observations tonight, upon the question now before the house, for the learned gentleman seemed to him to have forgotten the question entirely; had he been either a little more slow or more alert in his thoughts, he might perhaps, have met the subject upon it.—The question was, whether upon the discussion of this important bill, the short space between this and Tuesday next, should be allowed to endeavor to understand the clauses of the bill. The learned gentleman of course having studied the subject, must understand it perfectly; but he had not said one word

why other gentlemen, in order to understand it also, should not have time, as well as himself. Upon the former stage of this bill, the learned gentleman said nothing pressing upon the point of time ; indeed nobody could suppose that much expedition was thought of upon the subject ; for war had been declared against us long before any notice was given of any intention of bringing in this bill. There was another reason for some delay, and one which had been pressed a good deal by the learned gentleman himself when he opened the bill ; he meant the assistance of gentlemen of the long robe, particularly that of a learned and most able member of that house, and ornament of his profession (Mr. Erskine,) that assistance could not be had, if the house went into the committee to-morrow. As to the bill being in some parts of it tyrannical, Mr. Sheridan observed, that part of the subject had not been fairly treated by the advocates for the bill ; they said there was no evil in it for which there was not a remedy. If a man came from France, and was taken into custody for not complying with certain capricious distinctions, he might apply to the Secretary of State to be discharged, and he should have his liberty. How ? If the Secretary of State pleased, but not otherwise. Could any thing be more tyrannical than such a measure ? As to the libel on the people of England, that they were many of them disposed to sedition, that the present times are full of danger, and that the bill in question is only a mitigation of the law of treason as formed by the founders of the revolution, there was the most gross misapplication—at the time when the alterations were made in the act of King Edward III. and quoted as a specimen, there was indeed reason to apprehend sedition and rebellion ; that was a law in consequence of the petition of the people praying for it, and it was carried against the influence and in direct hostility to the crown. Indeed, Mr. Sheridan said, it was matter of astonishment to him, that gen-

tllemen could shew their faces to the people of this country, and tell them gravely, that there is treason and sedition in this country ; and there are the same reasons at this day for the bill in question, as there was at the time of the revolution ; that the present moment required the same restraints, as when there was a plot against the safety of the state ; that the people, when they were quiet, must submit to be treated as traitors ; and that at this hour, the same rigor in principle was to be observed. Men were brought daily to the block, when there was a plot for the assassination of King William. To say that these were times still more dangerous ; upon his honor, he was astonished at the effrontery of such observations. He was sure the charge of sedition on the people of this country, was a foul calumny upon them. Let the Attorney-General produce his proofs. Let him tell that house that he would take up one man in the kingdom for treason. Let him charge one man with a seditious view. But whenever these questions were asked, instead of shewing the existence of the evil, ministers contented themselves with producing a remedy. Did we ask for proof of sedition ? Look at the alien bill, was the answer. They proved the distemper, by insisting on providing a remedy. Like a physician saying to a person who knew himself to be well, " You want physic ;" or, " You must be bled to-day." If the answer is, " I am well, I do not want your assistance ;" then the doctor would affect a resolute tone, and insist on bleeding his patient to day : and if he did not then find himself ill, to put him in a strait waistcoat to-morrow. With respect to what the right honorable the Chancellor of the Exchequer had said upon Whigs and Tories, Mr. Sheridan did not doubt his skill. He did not know any person so well situated to prove that a man may affect to be a Whig, and be a Tory in his heart : he did not know a man who had greater reason to feel what he said upon that subject, or to under-

stand it better. However, he believed that if the right honorable gentleman meant any thing by what he said on that subject, he meant to convey a sentiment, and establish a doctrine, the most pernicious of all public liberty—that public profession of principle is altogether a piece of delusion upon the people of this country. This was done by the minister, with a view of bringing all public spirit into contempt, to destroy all distinction between the friends of freedom and the friends of despotism, and to build his own power upon the ruin of both: but, whatever he might think, there was too much good sense in the people of this country to be imposed on by such stale attempts; they began to see the difference between their friends and those who wished to deceive them. Mr. Sheridan concluded, with saying, he had no doubt but that ministers began to feel that the story of seditions, and all the trade of the alarmists, began to flag, and therefore this bill was brought in to revive the delusion; but the people might be said to be like those who are sworn at Highgate—they never would take counterfeit while they could have the reality.

Mr. Pitt explained, that he did not allude to the number of dissatisfied or seditious persons in this country when he mentioned our being in danger. By danger he meant the propagation of certain principles, which, if carried to their full extent in this country, it would be in a worse situation than even in the time he mentioned. With respect to the insinuation of the honorable gentleman upon Whigs and Tories, if any abandonment of principle was ascribed to him, or the attempt to subdue all principle in political considerations, he begged leave to say, it was an imputation which he disdained. He then insisted that he held not the principles of some persons who had lately called themselves Whigs, but the principles of liberty settled at the revolution.

Mr. Sheridan said, whether the right honorable gentleman disdained the imputation he did not care, only the more disdain he expressed the more Mr. Sheridan thought he had put the point aright. The right honorable gentleman said he was not one of the living Whigs, or those who lately called themselves so. Indeed, Mr. Sheridan said, he did not

hear him name any living Whigs, but observed, that, he seemed to allude to some dead ones. I wish, said Mr. Sheridan, he would take some of our Whig principles from us, instead of Whig members.

The motion was carried.

MARCH 22.

TRAITOROUS CORRESPONDENCE BILL.

The house went into a committee on this bill. On the preamble being read by the Chairman, which stated that it is expedient more effectually to prevent traitorous correspondence, &c. the Solicitor General moved, "That the consideration of the preamble should be postponed till the different clauses of the bill should be gone through." The motion was supported by Mr. Hawkins Browne, who was called to order by Mr. Bouverie, as having in the course of his speech deviated from the question.

Mr. SHERIDAN agreed that the honorable gentleman opposite to him (Mr. Browne) had been perfectly in order; but it had been said that his honorable friend (Mr. Fox) had been disorderly in his opposition to the postponing the preamble, which he could by no means admit. It might be true that in many cases it was usual and proper to postpone the preamble; but in this case, where the assumptions in the preamble afford the only justification of the enactments of the bill, to desire of gentlemen to postpone the preamble, without requiring any proof of these assumptions, was in truth desiring them to agree to all these enactments of such a new and alarming nature, without requiring the smallest evidence that there is any ground of necessity for them whatever.

After some further debate,

Mr. Sheridan rose again and said, that the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Burke) who had just sat down, had, as he usually did, made a very eloquent speech; and, as usual also, applied his wit, his mirth and humour, upon subjects which did not perhaps

call for either—wars, treasons, murders, and massacres. He should not follow the right honorable gentleman upon all he had said, because that would be entering into the discussion of points arising out of the clauses of the bill, which, in his opinion, ought to be reserved for discussion in the committee. The right honorable gentleman had begun with saying he was always desirous of appealing to the house, on the sense of what he called the good times of the constitution. Mr. Sheridan said, he should be glad to join in that appeal, if he saw it done with an honest intention, or if he did not see that this was done by gentlemen who only referred to those times when they had to introduce any subject which had for its object the increase of their own power hereafter, and took references from times of danger, for the purpose of quoting the degree of confidence which was then thought to be necessarily reposed in the officers of government; and thus the better to prepare the people at this time for the same confidence, when the same danger did not exist, and consequently where there could not be the same reason for such confidence and power. Here the right honorable gentleman's deception began. He said, that immediately after the declaration of rights, and the bill of rights, came a power by which the King was enabled to order any person to be taken up, and that on suspicion only, of being an enemy to the state. Having advanced thus far, the right honorable gentleman then came to a conclusion directly, that what was done on that occasion should certainly, by the fairest reason, be done on this; for, said he, would you not do now what the wisdom and virtue of your ancestors prompted them to do under similar circumstances? The answer was plain and short. The circumstances are not similar. We were, at the time that the right honorable gentleman alluded to, at the æra of a revolution. Was that the case with this country at this moment? Did the right honorable gentleman, or did they who

pretended to agree with him, mean to say, and to persevere in it as an argument, that we are now in an equal degree of danger, as we were at the time of the revolution? If this was answered in the affirmative, then there might upon that answer be an end entirely to every barrier which the subject ever had against oppression; for if we were now in a state as alarming as at that period, the argument would go to the suspension of the Habeas Corpus act, and to place the whole kingdom under martial law. But it seemed that the present time was to be considered similar to that of the revolution to a degree only—To what degree? If two or three factious persons could be named in this country, was that to be considered as similar in such a degree to the time of the revolution as to render it necessary to introduce the same measure of precaution as at that period? But who were these very factious persons? Upon this, however, the right honorable gentleman had come to something like a pledge that he would name certain persons of that description at some future day—"I now challenge him to name those persons when he pleases," said Mr. Sheridan, "for painful as these observations are for me to make, I must repeat to that right honorable gentleman that I expect to hear his list of names and his proofs;—but then let me tell him what sort of proof I shall require of him." He meant not to be satisfied with the right honorable gentleman's reiterating his charges vaguely, or even of his naming any particular men, and calling them traitors; because we all knew the facility with which that could be done. Nor did he mean to say he should be contented with hearing general assertions of our danger. He should expect to hear the right honorable gentleman mention the names of the conspirators, and what they were; and what measures they had taken to manifest their intentions, and consequently to justify the right honorable gentleman with loading them with the black appellation of

traitors. He should expect also, of all the supporters of the bill in question, as a matter of necessity, and as a measure justified by precedent, some proof of that necessity. If they failed in this, then he must declare them the calumniators of the people of this country. At the time which was now said to be similar to the present, he meant the revolution, something like evidence was given of the necessity of the measures which parliament adopted. A plot had been formed against the King's life, and the King himself came to parliament and informed them of the discovery of the plot, in a speech which he delivered from the throne. [Here Mr. Sheridan read the speech of King William to the parliament—the substance of which was, that there was a plot to assassinate His Majesty.] Would the right honorable gentleman assure us that his present Majesty had made such a declaration to him, even in private?—that there was a plan laid for the sudden invasion of the kingdom (of which there surely could be no danger, while we had so vigilant and active an administration); that some of the conspirators were already in custody, and that care had been taken to have the others discovered. Now, to be plain with gentlemen who said this bill was necessary, he must say that he wanted proof, something like this. And what was the case in the present moment, and how stood facts with respect to sedition in this country? Why, he believed there was one editor of a newspaper who had been frightened by ministers, and had run away; an attorney was under prosecution on a charge for which he had given bail, and a bill-sticker was in jail? These were the mighty proofs of the whole country being in a state of insurrection! But to come nearer to the right honorable gentleman's doctrine, and the consistency of his conduct—he had, in the course of the discussion of this subject, maintained the right of the legislature to alter the succession, and to support the principle of punishing those who asserted

a contrary doctrine ; and yet, if the right honorable gentleman was to be judged by his first pamphlet on the French revolution, he would be the first to incur that penalty. Having said this, he returned to what appeared to him to be the real spirit of treason ; and he desired the learned gentlemen on the other side to refute him, if they could. The true way of defining treason, was by the intention of the party ; and the overt-act was only to be regarded as evidence of the intention. As to the observations of the right honorable gentleman on the necessity of rights remaining in a state of inaction for a long time, that they might acquire new vigor ; and his simile of sleep to the body natural being the same as inactivity for a time to the body politic, there was no doubt of its being beautiful enough, and applicable too ; for the Minister had often sung a sort of lullaby to the constitution. But as sleep was the sister of death, and yet relieved the human body from the weariness of labor ; surely there was no propriety in comparing it to the affairs of human life, and the benefit of civil rights ; for although a human being might sleep to recover his health, there was no necessity for rights in society to be suspended in order to be preserved. The only objection he had to the figure was, that it had no truth for its foundation, for there was none of the weariness which required rest to any of the rights of the people of this country. The right honorable gentleman had made some allusions to a fortress, and said, that it was in some degree like a prison ; but it became so only in consequence of a siege. Here again truth was not attended to in the figure, and upon this occasion he could not help coming to some facts well known to the public. This he did to shew, that there was not any ground for alarm in this country ; and when he had done so, he trusted he should have answered the right honorable gentleman upon his observation of a fortress, evidently designed to prepare the people of this country for slavery, by comparing

the island to a besieged fortress. Then he must ask whether there was any real cause of alarm when the Duke of Richmond converted the Tower into a fortress, and gave it all the appearance of a place preparing to hold out against an attack? Was there any information of designs being formed for the taking it? Were there any well-grounded apprehensions of danger? If there were, then the precaution of the noble Duke was right—If not, he must say, that this was part of the system adopted by ministers for a well-understood purpose; they raised an alarm which themselves did not believe. The right honorable gentleman said, it was not necessary in all cases, to prove the existence of the crime, before he produced the remedy. Here again, Mr. Sheridan said, he must observe, the right honorable gentleman was wrong in principle; it was the essence of justice never to enforce a hardship without a proof of its necessity: As to the right honorable gentleman's observation upon a law, which prohibits a certain number of people going together with blacked faces, which he instanced as a proof that the law prohibits a thing innocent in itself, for the sake of preventing an evil that might possibly attend it, he must say, that here again the right honorable gentleman was wrong; for this very act was not passed without proof of there being a number of persons who frequently had disguised themselves in that manner for mischievous purposes. However, he was far from saying that a man should never make use of any art in support of his virtuous intentions. If any person carried a concealed dagger for the purpose of assassination, he was amenable to the law; but if he only brought it with him concealed, and made use of it for the purpose of heightening the effect of an oratorical attitude in the delivery of a sublime speech, he certainly was not. Again, the right honorable gentleman had alluded to the act of parliament which prohibited ships of a certain size and form from being employed in

certain parts of commerce, in which the revenue was interested ;—an act, Mr. Sheridan said, which was harsh enough, and such as he did not approve of, but yet it was not passed before there had been proof laid before parliament of the evils existing which this act was proposed to remedy.

Thus far he had chosen to follow the right honorable gentleman on his own ground, that laws were made against things in themselves entirely innocent for the purpose of preventing mischief. The truth, Mr. Sheridan said, was certainly so; but then the right honorable gentleman forgot to add a few words, a little essential to the sense of the maxim—"after some proof was given of the necessity of such a law:" the whole of this had been totally neglected by the right honorable gentleman, and all the advocates for the present bill. The right honorable gentleman said, that, as to the destruction of the constitution, he had no apprehension of it, and that he had no thought of giving it up; and then he launched out, as usual, into bitter invectives against the new affairs of France. Mr. Sheridan said, he had no objection to our avoiding to imitate the French, and to act for ourselves in every thing.—He wished that French principles, old as well as new, should be resisted; but if, in resisting the new, we inclined to imitate the old system of government in France, we should have no reason to congratulate each other upon our prudence. The old system of that country united all things that were hateful to a lover of liberty. It was kept up by the most abominable mode that was ever known in any part of Europe—by military insolence, instead of civil law—by extraordinary trust and confidence in the King's ministers, instead of watchfulness and jealousy—by tame acquiescence in all his measures, instead of resisting or examining any part of them; he wished, therefore, that as we rejected the new system of politics in France, we should take care not to fall into any imitation of the old.

As to what the right honorable gentleman had said about giving up, if that became inevitable, the liberty of his country ; and his remark, that were he Cæsar, he should rather yield to Brutus, than to the great monarch of Persia ; the situation of this country was not so bad as to make it necessary to enter into the imagination of any man that there was any danger to be apprehended to us from any disputes between individuals to any number, much less between any two individuals. But there might be danger in placing such confidence in any one, as to be blind to the tendency of his measures, and suffering him to proceed without opposing them ; for when Hannibal penetrated Italy, and arrived at the gates of Rome itself, notwithstanding all the devastation he made, Rome recovered. After the Romans were attacked, and the city sacked by the Gauls Rome recovered ; but after Cæsar had usurped the dominion, it never recovered ; nor should he think this country safe, if any man in it, whatever his station might be, should be suffered to proceed proudly, haughtily, and arrogantly, as if he were above the law ; and should afterwards, by raising a false alarm among the people, by saying that the constitution was in danger, that there were traitors in the country, ultimately obtain his object—the placing himself in his situation with an establishment of despotic power. The next point to be considered was, that of the charges against the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Burke) in the national convention. That right honorable gentleman had taken upon himself, on that occasion, to make use of the *visites domiciliares* as practised in France, as a proof of their violation of the principles of justice. It was certainly harsh enough ; but upon this point, the right honorable gentleman might find some topics at home that would very worthily employ his wit, if he pleased ; for to him the grievances and distresses of mankind were subjects of his mirth. He might see in this metropolis the *visites domici-*

liars thriving wonderfully under the auspices of Mr. Reeves, and the society of which he was so worthy a president ; as also under Mr. Luke Ideson, and Sir Joseph Bankes ; these gentlemen, by themselves and agents, particularly the latter, had entered into a great number of houses, and had called upon the occupiers of them to give in a particular description of their inmates, the sex, the age, the stature, the color, the complexion ; in short, Sir Joseph particularly had examined into these circumstances, with all the curiosity of a naturalist ; and he must say, that unless we abandoned this practice, we should complain with an ill grace of the *visites domiciliares*. As to the danger to which the right honorable gentleman alluded, and to which he said he was exposed, unless he has more apprehension of it than I have for him, said Mr. Sheridan, he will be pretty easy under that consideration. But, indeed, if he had not said he quoted from the *Moniteur*, I should have thought that he was speaking from his own mind, and for himself, as the whole of the matter is perfectly like the substance of his own speeches upon the affairs of France.—As to the gold to which the right honorable gentleman had alluded, certainly he had been a little public in the declaration, as well as the circumstances with which he had accompanied it ; he had, indeed, in the hints he had thrown out upon that subject, and the possible effect of it, reminded Mr. Sheridan of the practice in the trial of Sir Robert Walpole, when gentlemen in that house used to cry out, ‘ Places ! places ! places ! ’ But as to places, whether it was that gentlemen had lately gone over to the Minister in such numbers, that there was not room for them all, or that, in the language of John Bull, they had eaten up all the corn already, he knew not ; but he believed that, all circumstances considered, there was a tolerable security, at least for a time, for the independence of the right honorable gentleman. As to the observation of the noble

lord, that in all other wars between this country and France, the two countries had respectively paid attention to the constitution of each other; he wished to know whether the noble lord thought the fact so, when that power wanted to force us to accept a pretender to the throne? and whether, if the French do not again receive Mr. Frost with an address, and think proper to have another king, that we shall then be in a state wherein we shall have nothing to fear?

The question "That the preamble be postponed," was put and negatived.

Mr. Fox wished that the Attorney General would explain in what respect the statute of Edward III. was doubtful, and how far the present law was declaratory, and how far enactive? He begged likewise to know, whether it was to be temporary or perpetual, and argued on the inconveniences which he conceived to be necessarily attendant on either case. Mr. Fox regretted that the business should be brought on during the absence of his learned friend, in consequence of his necessary attendance on the circuit, when otherwise it might have been expected to receive so many lights from his professional knowledge.

The Attorney-General explained what parts of the bill were declaratory and what enactive. He regretted the absence of his learned friend, but said that if the bill was postponed on that account, it would have to fall into other hands than his own, as he was obliged shortly to go into the country on a business perhaps at least equally urgent.

Mr. Sheridan observed, that the learned gentleman had said nothing on the subject of the amendment of his honorable friend, and thought that he had not been sufficiently explicit in answering the questions that had been put to him relative to the present bill. According to the first clause of the present bill, if a man thought proper to send a pot of anchovies or a box of macaroni to his friend abroad, he might be hanged. Was that clause enactive or merely declaratory?

The Solicitor-General spoke a few words relative to the penalties of the bill.

Mr. Sheridan asked, whether or not by the words, "within any of the dominions of His Majesty, or

being a subject of His Majesty," it was meant that the act should apply to His Majesty's Irish subjects; and also, whether or not, by the words "occupied by any force employed, or to be employed by France, or in alliance with France;" it was meant to extend the penalties of the bill to supplying with the enumerated articles any port in the dominions of any state that might be over-run by, or drawn into an alliance with France; and what in this case was to be the definition or construction of force.

The Attorney-General said, the clause did not bear that construction; and that a man could be alone guilty of high treason under it, who should send the enumerated goods to a place occupied by a naval or military force, acting with, or preparing to act, in aid of France.

A debate ensued respecting the manner in which Ireland was affected by the bill.

Mr. Sheridan said, those only were to blame for the present discussion who had so framed their clause as to open a door to jealousies and discontents in Ireland; and those were the friends of both countries who wished to remove all grounds for jealousies and discontents between two nations who had one common interest. The bill to which allusion had been made was so far from having been hasty or unwise, that it was to that very bill we were indebted for the preservation of the connection between the two kingdoms. No man was more convinced than he was of the necessity of a good understanding between both; and he had not a doubt, if left to themselves, they would for ever agree. The Irish parliament had never yet refused to adopt any law which England thought it for the benefit of the empire to make the law of the two countries; nay, it had re-enacted the Irish act, by which, and by which alone, the crown of Ireland was annexed to that of England. As for himself, he was so thoroughly persuaded that the two nations ought to act upon the same principle, that hostile as he was to the present bill, and wishing most sincerely that it might never pass into a law here, yet, should it

become an act of the British parliament, it would give him very great concern indeed if it was not adopted by Ireland ; because if it was not, England could not reap the benefit which she expected from it, if it should not be re-enacted by the parliament of Ireland. The good sense of the latter would always make her co-operate with England in the general cause, and there could not be good policy in forcing upon her, by a side wind, a measure which he was convinced she would be forward enough to adopt of her own accord. Adverting to Mr. Pitt's doctrine of the two kingdoms mutually legislating for each other, he said it reminded him of the manner in which a deep philosopher of Cambridge had once solved the question—whether the sun turned round the earth, or the earth round the sun ?—his answer was, “ Partly both, for it is sometimes one, and sometimes the other.” Mr. Sheridan afterwards pointed out several amendments which ought to be made in the clause, besides those which the learned framer had allowed to be necessary ; and he said he would not consent to pass over the clause in its present shape, under a promise that provisos should afterwards be brought up for removing the various objections to the clause ; for though such provisos were often promised, he seldom ever saw them afterwards produced, or produced in the stage that was expected.

The Attorney-General moved “ That the chairman should leave the chair, report progress, and ask leave to sit again.” This was carried.

MARCH 25.

TRAITOROUS CORRESPONDENCE BILL.

Mr. SHERIDAN began with alluding to the change that had taken place in the arrangement of the business of the week, and expressed his satisfaction, that the honorable and learned gentleman

(the Attorney General) did not now conceive his bill to be so pressing as he and its other supporters had done a few days ago ; but had been taught to think that a matter of such momentous importance required at least some little consideration. Mr. Sheridan proceeded to say, that, with respect to the business to which he was now to call the attention of the house, his instructions had been, and his intention was, to have brought forward, as on that day, such facts and arguments as he trusted would have fully supported the motion which he meant to have submitted to the house, that leave should be given to bring in a bill for reforming the internal government of the royal boroughs of Scotland. He had, however, been given to understand, that if the object of the bill, which he now wished to introduce, was meant to be carried as far as his former propositions on the subject had gone, which was certainly the case, a determined opposition would be given, even to the motion for leave to bring in the bill ; by which means the matter would end without any investigation, and the great purpose of those numerous and respectable bodies of men, who had sent up petitions to that house, would be thereby defeated, viz. the having all the facts and evidence on the subject fully and fairly considered and discussed. This being the case, he found himself inclined to change his plan, and to follow the mode which had been adopted last year, of moving to go into a committee of the whole house to take into consideration the several petitions which had been presented in the present session, with the accounts and other papers on the table. He thought he might be justified in saying that such admissions on the subject had been already sanctioned by the house, in the proceedings which took place last session on the Lord Advocate's bill, &c. as ought to be a pledge against refusing leave to bring in such a bill as he would have to propose ; but on this he did not wish to rest, since he was told an opposition was in-

tended, because a full and fair inquiry, which is the great wish of the petitioners, as expressed in their petitions, would perhaps be best answered by going into a committee. It was indeed impossible that the subject could be so well discussed, or that all the circumstances of which evidence had been adduced could be so fully understood and canvassed in the house as in a committee. The mode of proceeding which he would adopt in the committee would be, first, to move a string of resolutions, founded on facts, with respect to existing abuses; secondly, to detail the mode of remedy which he would propose; and thirdly, the result would be a motion for leave to bring in a bill to effectuate such remedy. He trusted that the right honorable gentleman opposite to him (Mr. Dundas) could have no objection to taking up the business in this way. That right honorable gentleman had spoken with much feeling, at the beginning of this session, of his unpopularity in Scotland; and he was told that that unpopularity, as far as regarded the present subject, was not so much owing to the opposition which had been given to it by the right honorable gentleman, as to the mode of that opposition, by refusing to go into any inquiry whatever, after such a mass of evidence had been laid upon the table in consequence of the orders of the house. It would surely not be said that there was not time to get through this business in the present session, when the right honorable gentleman himself had so much other business yet to carry through; and he hoped also, that no remarks would be made on its not being brought forward sooner. The petitioners were unquestionably the best judges as to the proper time of bringing on the subject; and it seemed but a matter of prudence to allow the late panic, whether well or ill-founded, to subside a little, before they proceeded in a business which had somewhat the appearance of innovation, though, in truth, it was only in appearance. Mr. Sheridan concluded with

moving, "That the several petitions, &c. on the subject of a reform in the internal government of the royal burghs of Scotland, should be referred to a committee of the whole house."

Mr. Dundas proposed, instead of a committee of the whole house, the appointment of a select committee.

Mr. Sheridan said, he would not object to the proposal of the right honorable Secretary; for, perhaps, it might tend to shorten time, and to bring the business forward in a proper shape. It was rather curious, however, that the right honorable gentleman should be surprised at his not having now moved for a select committee; as it would, no doubt, be recollected, that he did so last year, and that it was then more opposed than even an open committee. There was, he said, a peculiar hardship in the situation of the petitioners, who had fully established, by evidence on the table, that the spirit of their original charters had been departed from; that the public funds of the boroughs had been wasted and dilapidated; that money had been illegally extorted and exacted by assessments and otherwise, upon unjust pretences; and that various other abuses had been practised. He had, however, no objection at all to go into the proposition of the right honorable gentleman. As to the appointment of a select committee, provided it should not go into any minute length; and, although the papers and mass of evidence were bulky, yet he thought, with the helps which the committee would have, it would not be difficult to arrange and digest them; and he conceived they might be enabled to make their report to the house in about a week. He would therefore conclude with moving,—“That the several petitions presented to this house during the present session, and the papers and accounts presented during former sessions, respecting the internal government of the Royal Boroughs of Scotland, should be referred to a committee, to examine the matter

therein contained, and to report thereupon to the house."

The question was put and carried.

MARCH 25.

TRAITOROUS CORRESPONDENCE BILL.

Mr. Burke spoke at considerable length, and alluded to the possibility of there being traitors in North Britain; he also observed upon the seditious disposition in this part of the country, and the necessity of the present bill.

Mr. SHERIDAN answered Mr. Burke upon all the points to which he had alluded, and renewed the challenge which he gave Mr. Burke on a former debate upon this bill, which was, to name the persons whom he loaded with the title of traitors, or friends of the French, or enemies to the constitution, or any of the other odious appellations which his imagination could suggest to him.

Mr. Burke admitted, that he had said the French had endeavoured to create a faction in this country in their favor, and that they had to a certain degree succeeded. He did not know any persons in this country who had been guilty of any overt acts against the constitution; if he had known any such persons, he knew his duty too well to neglect it, he would have given proper information before a magistrate, in order that such persons might have been brought to justice. As to the other part, he had no person to name, he only meant that the French had endeavored to create a faction in their favor in this country, and that they had succeeded to a certain degree.

Mr. Sheridan in answer, observed that the right honorable gentleman had said in that house, that he could name persons to their confusion; and that there existed a traitorous faction in this country; this he now abandoned; he did not wish to pin him down to his expression, and should take no farther notice of it, nor press any thing upon the subject again.

MARCH 27.

WAYS AND MEANS—LOAN.

Mr. SHERIDAN said, that one of the principal causes of the difficulty which the Minister had experienced in negotiating the loan, arose from the vast quantity of unfunded debt which was floating in the market: had he funded this debt, he would have found in new Exchequer bills a resource that would have secured him from the consequences of being at the mercy of money lenders. Lord North, by having, during the period of his administration, which preceded the American war, reduced the unfunded debt to a moderate size, was, by that very measure, enabled to raise money on terms much more favorable than if he had suffered the market to be overstocked with floating navy and exchequer bills.

MARCH 28.

LOAN, AND REDUCTION OF NATIONAL DEBT.

Mr. SHERIDAN observed, that it had been generally understood, that private business would occupy the attention of the house until after five o'clock, and therefore he did not attend until that hour; but he heard with some surprise, that the resolutions of the Committee of yesterday had been read and agreed to, in the midst of private business; this, he said, was unfair and uncandid, and he had no doubt that many gentlemen would have observations to make upon the report. Mr. Sheridan maintained that the commissioners of the fund for the reduction of the national debt ought to have been consulted upon the plan of the loan, and that they might, if they thought fit, advance for that loan the sum which was to have been applied to the reduction of the debt, as mentioned by the right honorable gentleman on the opening of the budget. [Here Mr. Sheridan

recited part of the act by which the fund for the reduction of the national debt was created.] His object, he said, was to know what communication, if any, the Chancellor of the Exchequer had with the Commissioners upon the subject of this loan, previous to his concluding the bargain with the subscribers. Mr. Sheridan then moved, "That there be laid before the house the communication between the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Commissioners for the reduction of the national debt, and the reasons assigned by them for not having demanded the right of subscribing to the present loan."

Mr. Sheridan's motion was negatived.

TRAITOROUS CORRESPONDENCE BILL.

On the first clause, which enacts, that from the 20th of April next, during the continuance of the present war between Great Britain and France, if any person residing in Great Britain, knowingly and wilfully, shall, on his own account, or credit, or on the account or credit, or by the direction of any other person or persons whomsoever, or wheresoever resident, sell, supply, or deliver, or send for the purpose of being sold, supplied, or delivered, or shall agree to sell, or deliver, &c. shall be guilty. It was proposed to leave out the words—"shall agree to sell, or deliver."

The question being put by Sir Elijah Impey, the chairman of the committee, strangers were, as usual, ordered to withdraw. In the interval, a number of gentlemen who had not been in the house when the question was put, entered, and seated themselves on the ministerial side.

Mr. Sheridan insisted, that as they were not present when the question was put, they were not entitled to vote.

Mr. Dundas contended, that the question having been put before the gallery was cleared, it ought to be put again.

This brought on a conversation on the point of order, which the Speaker at last decided in favour of Mr. Sheridan, laying it down as the old established rule, that the question might be put either before the gallery was cleared or after, and that being once put, those who were not in the body of the house at the time, could not be permitted to vote.

The gentlemen who came in after the question was put, were ordered to withdraw, and the committee divided.—For leaving out the words 27; against it 51.

Mr. SHERIDAN observed, that as the Chancellor of the Exchequer had been so generous as to allow the French, coats to their backs, and stockings to their legs, he might as well let them have a few boots and shoes from his constituents at Stafford, and moved an amendment to that effect; but the amendment was rejected.

About ten o'clock, a second division took place on an amendment moved by Mr. Sheridan, to secure the interest of the foreign proprietors in the British funds—ayes 34; noes 113.

APRIL 4.

TRAITOROUS CORRESPONDENCE BILL.

On the clause prohibiting, under the pain of treason, the purchase, &c. of lands in France, the Solicitor-General moved an amendment, for the purpose of limiting its prohibitions solely to the purchasing, or agreeing to purchase lands, by omitting altogether the other prohibitions contained in the clause, as to the purchase of assignats, &c. This was carried, and further amendments proposed. Mr. Fox said, as the clause was now limited, he was convinced it could be persisted in for no other reason, than that gentlemen on the other side of the house, having been obliged to abandon the most offensive parts of the bill, thought it rather too much to give up the whole.

Mr. Sheridan entirely agreed with his honorable friends. He thought the clause as now amended, so perfectly nugatory, that it would be very much like prohibiting a gardener to lay out a garden, and make hot-beds, &c. in Lapland. In fact, the present bill, as it now stood, instead of bearing its present title, ought to be called a bill to authorise British subjects to clothe the French army with woollen cloth, and to prohibit their selling them a pair of boots, under the pain of treason.

The committee divided—ayes in favour of the clause 77; noes 19.

APRIL 16.

LORD AUCKLAND'S MEMORIAL TO THE STATES
GENERAL.

Mr. SHERIDAN hoped the house would suffer him to speak, though he did not know whether he should, any more than the noble lord (Fielding), conclude with a motion; on that head, he said, he should be determined by the answer to a question, which he was going to put to His Majesty's ministers. The question was, whether a paper which had appeared in all the public prints, and was therein styled a paper, delivered to their High Mightinesses the States General on the 5th instant, and signed Auckland and Louis de Staremburg, was an authentic copy of a paper delivered on that day by the English and Imperial ambassadors at the Hague?

Mr. Pitt replied, that a paper, signed by the English and Imperial ambassadors at the Hague, was delivered by them to the States General, on the 5th of April; that he had seen an authentic copy of it; but that he could not tell whether that which the honorable gentleman said had appeared in all the public prints was a correct copy or not, as he had not read it in print. If the honorable gentleman wished to be fully informed on that head, the most proper step for him to take for that purpose, would be to move for an official copy of the paper in question.

Mr. Sheridan desired to know whether the right honorable gentleman would have any objection to his moving for it at that moment?

Mr. Pitt said he had: and as the honorable member might probably intend to ground some proceeding on this paper, he would recommend it to him to give notice of the day on which he should move for the production of the state paper to which he had referred.

Mr. Sheridan accordingly gave notice, that he would submit such a motion on Thursday; and he said, that if it should be found that the printed paper was an exact copy of the state paper delivered by Lord Auckland to the States General, he hoped

the right honorable gentleman would agree with him, that it was as execrable and as unprincipled a paper as had ever disgraced the diplomatic world ; and that the noble lord who had dared to present it, ought to be immediately recalled, and impeached.

The house adjourned.

APRIL 18.

LORD AUCKLAND'S MEMORIAL TO THE STATES
GENERAL.

MR. SHERIDAN said, that last Tuesday he had stated to the house, that he should this day move for the production of a state paper ; and he assured the house, that he did not move for that paper for the information of the house or of the public, nor did he move it for curiosity ; with a view that it should be followed up by a motion for an address instantly to recal Lord Auckland from his present situation at the Hague, and afterwards with one of a still stronger nature. The right honorable gentleman (the Chancellor of the Exchequer) had wished this motion to be postponed to this day, and he had conformed with that wish. With regard to the paper he should move for, he said, he trusted that, on a very slight inspection of it, every man must be convinced, that it could not be either for the honor or the credit of His Majesty's ministers to shelter either Lord Auckland or themselves, by withholding the paper for which he should move, and which was the only document on which he could regularly form his other intended motion : and therefore, without saying one word more, he might move for this paper ; at the same time he was aware, that in this paper, a great number of others were referred to, most of which had already been before the public, although not officially before

that house ; and therefore he had no objection to extending his motion to all the documents alluded to.

A conversation took place between Mr. Pitt and Mr. Sheridan as to the specific papers which would be wanted for the future discussion of the subject: that being settled,

Mr. Sheridan moved, " That an humble address be presented to His Majesty, praying that he will be graciously pleased to give directions for laying before the house a copy of the memorial dated the 5th of April instant, and presented by the States General to the British and Imperial ministers."

This being agreed to,

Mr. Sheridan gave notice of his motion on this subject on Thursday the 22d, but afterwards put it off until the Thursday following.

APRIL 25.

LORD AUCKLAND'S MEMORIAL TO THE STATES GENERAL.

Mr. SHERIDAN now rose, and said, that the motion which he should have the honor of submitting to the house, was one that not only involved the character of the right honorable gentleman (the Chancellor of the Exchequer) and the whole of His Majesty's ministers, but also the character of the British nation, and therefore was of the highest importance. It had in view that of calling for an explanation of the real intent, nature, purpose, and object of the war in which we were now engaged. Such was the description of the motion with which he should preface his address to the house. In the course of the discussions which had taken place on the present war, on one subject there had been a concurrence of opinion, whatever difference subsisted on others ; —that the increasing power and ambitious views of France should be resisted, and our allies protected, was unanimously agreed to. On the subject of the

war, three different opinions had occurred ; the first thought it a war of necessity, but limited as to its object ; the second, in which he classed, thought that no administration should permit the independence of this country to be in danger from the exorbitant power of France, or the rights of our allies to be invaded ; yet, thinking the security of this country, and indemnification to Holland might have been obtained by negociation, they thought the war, at the period it occurred, not necessary. A third class viewed the power of France as much less pernicious than the principles she had adopted ; and abhorring the conduct of those in authority there, thought vengeance and extermination to those men and those principles, were objects which this country was bound in interest and duty to pursue. He, and others with whom he had the honor and pleasure to agree, had endeavoured to draw from those gentlemen something like a definition of the extent to which their principles might or would lead them ; but from all the discussion which took place upon that subject, nothing like an explanation was given upon that point. This day, however, he was determined to put the subject to the test, and he should maintain that ministers had abandoned the principles of the war, upon which alone they had the assistance of the moderate, and the general concurrence of the country, and the only principle they themselves were fond of professing, namely, to keep faith with our allies, to check the aggrandizement of France, and to preserve the safety of this country. If, in entering upon this subject, any gentleman expected that he should be brought to pledge himself in the least degree with respect to the principles or the politics of the noble Lord (Auckland), or that he should be influenced by any considerations with regard to that nobleman, such a gentleman would certainly be disappointed ; for he must frankly declare, that personally against him, or any other person in administration, he had no ill will ; but at the same time he

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had no hesitation in saying, that he did not respect or esteem him. He would say no more upon that subject, for a reason always conclusive with him, because he was not present; all, therefore, he should say of him, he begged to be understood as speaking of His Majesty's minister at the Hague. In this view, he must say, that he disapproved of every memorial that noble lord had set his name to, from the disturbances in France, down to the signing that of the 5th of the present month, upon which the motion he should conclude with would be founded. All he was concerned in was marked by a sort of officious ostentation, which ill became the character he ought to represent. Instead of the moderate language of a minister, desirous to shew that he was only an ambassador, he appeared always in the style of a viceroy, whose business it was to dictate and command. The paper with which he announced the war with France, was of this haughty, arrogant style, in which he called the National Assembly of France miscreants. Such language, Mr. Sheridan said, was not only improper, but, under the circumstances of the case, inexcusable; it was not the effect of an overpowering warmth, which frequently accompanied the animation of debate; they were the cool collected words of an ambassador, who ought to have reflected that he represented His Majesty of Great Britain, and the people of England; both of whom, he was sure, would be ashamed of such expressions;—expressions which could answer no good purpose; neither our soldiers nor our sailors would enlist the sooner, nor fight the better for it; and the people of this country ought not to be supposed to use harsh expressions against any others who had the direction of the public force of a nation, still less that they could instruct their own ambassador to be intolerant: such conduct would be disgraceful and ignominious. Here, to illustrate this point, Mr. Sheridan made a quotation from Vattel, on the law of nations, who says, that for

nations at war it is necessary to observe, that they ought to abstain from all harsh expressions of hatred, animosity, or contempt of each other, &c. This, he said, appeared to him to contain so good and necessary a lesson to Lord Auckland, that in the next dispatches, a copy of it ought to be sent to him. With regard to the specific paper of the 5th of April, he objected to it, not only on account of its particular indecency, but also on account of its opening and disclosing a new principle for carrying on the war—a principle hitherto in this country entirely without foundation. The first translation from the French stated, “That some of these detestable regicides are now in such a situation, that they can be subjected to the sword of the law.” But from that which was now upon the table, a new colour was attempted to be given to the sentence, by saying, “liable to be subjected to the sword of the law ;” this, he said, was not warranted by the original ; for the plain sense of the sentence was, that these persons might be sacrificed, because they were in the hands of the Dutch. Again, the paper stated a recital of a former declaration, that his Britannic Majesty and their High Mightinesses would not fail to pursue the most efficacious measures to prevent the persons, who might themselves be guilty of so atrocious a crime, from finding any asylum in their respective states. To which the Dutch gave answer, that they would refuse any asylum to such persons ; that they would drive them away ; but not one word about putting them to death. The war was declared on the 21st of January, and there the matter rested till the 5th of April, and for what reason ? Because it was not until this time the commissioners of the Convention got into custody. It was only then necessary to say, that these regicides should be subjected to the sword of the law, which was, in other words, that they should be put to death. If ministers said they gave no instructions for this, he said he should be perfectly satisfied, and

the infamy would only fall upon the individual.—The noble lord proceeded to state in his memorial, that the divine vengeance seemed not to be tardy; upon this he had only to observe, that we were engaged in a war, which for our safety we had pursued, to the accomplishment of its originally avowed object; and with respect to the divine vengeance, from motives of respect, decorum, and piety, we ought to be silent. The memorial was as follows:—

TRANSLATION.

High and mighty Lords,

It is known that towards the end of the month of September, last year, his Britannic Majesty and your High Mightinesses gave, in concert, a solemn assurance, that in case the imminent danger which then threatened the lives of their most Christian Majesties, and their family should be realized, His Majesty and your High Mightinesses would not fail to take the most efficacious measures to prevent the persons who might render themselves guilty of so atrocious a crime, from finding any asylum in your respective dominions. This event, which was foreseen with horror, has taken place; and the Divine vengeance seems not to have been tardy. Some of these detestable regicides are already in such a situation, that they may be subjected to the sword of the law. The rest are still in the midst of a people whom they have plunged into an abyss of evils, and for whom famine, anarchy, and civil war, are preparing new calamities. In short, every thing that we see happen, induces us to consider as at hand the end of these wretches, whose madness and atrocities have filled with terror and indignation all those who respect the principles of religion, morality, and humanity.

The undersigned, therefore, submit to the enlightened judgment and wisdom of your High Mightinesses, whether it would not be proper to employ all the means in your power to prohibit from entering your states in Europe, or your colonies, all those members of the self titled National Convention, or of the pretended Executive Council, who have, directly or indirectly, participated in the said crime; and if they should be discovered and arrested, to deliver them up to justice, that they may serve as a lesson and example to mankind.

Done at the Hague, this 5th day of April, 1795.

(Signed)

AUCKLAND.

LOUIS C. DE STARHEMBERG.

[The translation above given is the same with that originally inserted in most of the newspapers; from which the translation presented to the house of commons differs, by substituting for the sentence printed in roman—Some of these detestable regicides are already liable to be subjected to the sword of the law—and for wretches, Malheureux, unhappy persons.]

These men were delivered up by the treachery of Dumourier; and Lord Auckland recommended to the Dutch, that they might be murdered and assassinated. He wished to know if it was possible for a more horrid principle to be entertained, or one, if followed up, more likely to be attended with more horrid consequences. Could we suppose that the French would not retaliate? What then would result? a general massacre of all prisoners of war. Such sentiments were odious to any man possessing the least feeling of humanity. The fate of those people, it seemed, was to be a lesson and example to mankind. He was sure the people of this country detested such lessons and examples. It reminded him of a proclamation recommending the extermination of America, during the war, and whilst the noble Lord (Auckland) was commissioner there; and to which there was a very sensible protest, which was supposed to be the production of a right honorable gentleman (Mr. Burke) now in the house. This was drawn after the able speeches of Mr. Fox, Mr. Powys, and others in that house; and the Duke of Grafton and Duke of Richmond in the other; and was signed by a great number of the first persons in this country. This protest admirably explained the fatal effects of attempting the destruction or dismemberment of an empire. Here Mr. Sheridan read the protest, and observed, that he wished this also to be sent in the next dispatches to Lord Auckland. But again, to return to the paper of the 5th of April, Mr. Sheridan said, he objected to it for a reason which was independent of the general ground he had already stated; it was that of declaring any peace with the people of France utterly unattainable, until there should be dictated, according to the desire of the combined powers, a certain form of government to France. Were we, he asked, at war with the nation of France at this moment? If the principle on which we proceeded to the war was followed, he would say that we were not

at war with the nation of France. The object we professed to have in view was accomplished; and we should negotiate with those who had the direction of the public force. Of what use was it to us to call their armies a banditti of robbers, and their mariners pirates? At last we must negotiate with them, or go the length of endeavouring to destroy them altogether—a fruitless and a vain attempt. Was it the object, or was it not, of this war, on our part, to assist the conspiracy to dictate a form of government to France, or totally to destroy the whole nation? He wanted a plain explicit answer. Let the minister speak fairly out. The people of England ought to know what were the views of the minister upon this war, and to what extent it was to be carried, that they might not be proceeding under a delusion. Supposing we had gained our original purpose, he wanted to know how peace was to be obtained, without negociation with those who have the exercise of government. If we countenanced the memorial of Lord Auckland, we should say, that the whole National Convention—all the members of the districts—in short, about eight or nine millions of people, must be put to death, before we can negotiate for peace. Supposing that we were to join the conspiracy to dictate a form of government to France, he then should wish to know what sort of government it was that we were to insist on. Were we to take the form of it from that exercised by the Emperor—or that of the King of Prussia? or was it to be formed by the lady who so mildly conducted the affairs of Russia? or were they all to lay their heads together, and by the assistance of the Pope, dictate a form of government to France? Were the French to have a constitution, such as the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Burke) was likely to applaud? Indeed he feared, that this was not yet settled; and there were various specimens of what had been already thought of by different powers. There were two manifestoes of

the Prince of Cobourg; the one promised the form of government chosen by themselves, in which they agreed to have a monarchy; and afterwards in the course of four days, this promise was retracted in consequence of the accession of Dumourier to the confederacy—What would the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Burke) say if they should not give the French the form of the constitution of Poland;—or would he content himself with saying, they ought not to have such a constitution? He believed that neither the Chancellor of the Exchequer, nor any of his supporters, would say any thing at present upon that subject. It appeared however somewhat mysterious, perhaps, that after the congress at Antwerp, in which Great Britain was not unrepresented, that the intention of the combined powers had altered; and that a much more sanguinary mode was to be pursued against France than had been before intended; and perhaps the time might come when the parties might follow the example set by the manifesto of the Duke of Brunswick, and affirm that these were threats which were not intended to be carried into execution. But this was not the way to amuse us. The people of England would not long be content to remain in the dark as to the object of the war. Again he must ask, what was the object of the war? Again he must ask, what was the object of our pursuit in conjunction with the other powers against France? Was it to restore the ancient tyranny and despotism of that nation? This would please some people, he knew;—particularly emigrants; but nothing would be so hateful to the people of this country, or any other where there existed the least love of freedom; nor could any thing be more destructive to the tranquillity and happiness of Europe. Were we to join Dumourier in a declaration not to rest until we had put to death those detestable regicides, calling themselves philosophers, and all the miscreants who had destroyed all lawful authority in France? If we were, he

would venture to say, this would be a war for a purpose entirely new in the history of mankind ; and as it was called a war of vengeance, he must say, that we arrogated to ourselves a right which belonged to the divinity, to whom alone vengeance ought to be left. If the minister said, that on our part there was no intention to interfere in the internal government of France, he must then ask what were the views of the other powers, with whom we now acted in concert against France. Was it to make a partition of France, as they did of Poland ? Or should he be told, that as far as regarded the affairs of France under the present power, he was talking of none who ought to be mentioned as a people ; that the *sans culottes* were too contemptible a race to be mentioned ; he would say, he meant to ask what was to become of the whole nation of France ? If he was told that it was impossible for the crowned heads, acting in concert upon this great occasion, to have any but just and honorable views, he would answer that the subject was of too much magnitude to be allowed to pass in such a manner ; and in his suspicions he was justified by the example, and fortified by the observation of an honorable gentleman (Mr. Jenkinson) with respect to the father of the present Emperor, that no man ought to take his word for one hour. No material alteration, he believed, had taken place in the views of that court since the death of that prince, nor of others in the present confederacy. Were we to forget that the King of Prussia encouraged the Brabanters to revolt, and then left them to their fate ? Were we to forget the recent conduct with respect to Poland ? Were we to forget the taking of Dantzic and Thorn ? Indeed he thought, that those who every day told us, in pompous language, of the necessity there was for kings, and of the service they did to the cause of humanity, they should at least have spared the public the pain of thinking of these subjects, by not entering into the views of that un-

natural confederacy. Indeed it was impossible for him to dismiss the consideration of Poland, without advertng to an eloquent passage in the work of a right honorable gentleman, who was an enthusiastic admirer of the late revolution there. Here Mr. Sheridan quoted the following passage of Mr. Burke's Appeal from the Old to the New Whigs:—

“ The state of Poland was such, that there could scarcely exist two opinions, but that a reformation of its constitution, even at some expense of blood, might be seen without much disapprobation. No confusion could be feared in such an enterprise; because the establishment to be reformed was itself a state of confusion. A king without authority; nobles without union or subordination; a people without arts, industry, commerce, or liberty; no order within; no defence without; no effective public force, but a foreign force, which entered a naked country at will, and disposed of every thing at pleasure. Here was a state of things which seemed to invite, and might, perhaps, justify bold enterprise and desperate experiment. But in what manner was this chaos brought into order? The means were as striking to the imagination, as satisfactory to the reason, and soothing to the moral sentiments. In contemplating that change, humanity has every thing to rejoice and to glory in; nothing to be ashamed of, nothing to suffer. So far as it has gone, it probably is the most pure and defecated public good which ever has been conferred on mankind. We have seen anarchy and servitude at once removed; a throne strengthened for the protection of the people, without trenching on their liberties; all foreign cabal banished, by changing the crown from elective to hereditary; and what was a matter of pleasing wonder, we have seen a reigning king, from an heroic love to his country, exerting himself with all the toil, the dexterity, the management, the intrigue, in favor of a family of strangers, with which ambitious men labor for the aggrandisement of their own. Ten millions of men in a way of being freed gradually, and therefore safely to themselves and the state; not from civil or political chains, which, bad as they are, only fetter the mind, but from substantial personal bondage. Inhabitants of cities, before without privileges, placed in the consideration which belongs to that improved and connecting situation of social life. One of the most proud, numerous, and fierce bodies of nobility and gentry ever known in the world, arranged only in the foremost rank of free and generous citizens. Not one man incurred loss, or suffered degradation. All, from the king to the day-laborer, were improved in their condition. Every thing was kept in its place and order; but in that place and order, every thing was bettered. To add to this happy wonder (this unheard-of conjunction of wisdom and fortune) not one drop of blood was spilled; no treachery; no outrage, no system of slander more cruel than the sword; no studied insults on religion, morals, or manners; no spoil; no confiscation; no citizen beggared; none

imprisoned ; none exiled : the whole was effected with a policy, a discretion, an unanimity and secrecy, such as have never been before known on any occasion ; but such wonderful conduct was reserved for this glorious conspiracy in favor of the true and genuine rights and interests of men. Happy people, if they know how to proceed as they have begun ! Happy prince, worthy to begin with splendor, or to close with glory, a race of patriots and of kings : and to leave

*A name, which every wind to heav'n would bear,
Which men to speak, and angels joy to hear.*

To finish all—this great good, as in the instant it is, contains in it the seeds of all farther improvement ; and may be considered as in a regular progress, because founded on similar principles, towards the stable excellence of a British constitution.

Here was a matter for congratulation and for festive remembrance through ages. Here moralists and divines might indeed relax in their temperance to exultate their humanity."

Such, Mr. Sheridan, said, was the description which the right honorable gentleman gave to that revolution ; was it to be supposed, that he would afterwards say, that this ought to have been trampled upon and destroyed, or should suffer such an event to happen, and never utter a word upon the subject. He did not think that monarchs of the present day had fulfilled the promises that some persons had made, and which had been expected from them, so that their names might be handed down to posterity as a glorious example of integrity and justice ! With respect to the future views of the different powers, they might best be conjectured by what had already happened. The Empress of Russia, upon the sincerity of whose motives, and integrity of whose actions, there could be no doubt, previous to the attack on Poland, among other things in her manifesto, said by her minister—

" From these considerations, Her Imperial Majesty, my most gracious mistress, as well to indemnify herself for her many losses, as for the future safety of her Empire and the Polish dominions, and for the cutting off at once, for ever, all future disturbances and frequent changes of government, has been pleased now to take under her sway, and to unite for ever to her Empire, the following tracts of land, with all their inhabitants."

This was the language for which the confederates were to justify perhaps the future taking un-

der their sway, and uniting for ever to their empire, part of the dominions of France.—We had heard much of the abominable system of affiliation adopted by the French; but this was a Russian impartial affiliation, and no doubt the confederate powers approved of it.—In like manner will they affiliate all France, if they can. So will they England, when they have it in their power; and he was sorry to say, that if we joined in that infamous confederacy, and the people agreed to it, England would deserve to be so treated. The Empress then proceeded to state what she expected for the favor she had conferred—

“ Her imperial Majesty expects from the gratitude of her new subjects, that they, being placed by her bounty on an equality with Russians, shall, in return, transfer their love of their former country to the new one, and live in future attached to so great and generous an Empress.”—

On an equality with Russia! This was a glorious equality, liable to be sent to Siberia with other Russian slaves. For this mighty favor they were to transfer, as naturally might be expected, the whole love they had for their native country, to Russia, their new and happy land—for the same minister of this equitable and generous Empress proceeded to say,

“ I, therefore, inform every person, from the highest to the lowest, that within one month, they must take the oath of allegiance before the witnesses whom I shall appoint; and if any gentlemen, or other ranks possessing real or immoveable property, regardless of their own interest, should refuse to take the oath prescribed, three months are allowed for the sale of their immoveables, and their free departure over the borders; after the expiration of which term, all their remaining property shall be confiscated to the crown.”

Really after such specimens, one would have supposed, but for the well-known character of the council of these confederate powers, they were actuating under the influence of madness, or they would not thus think of insulting the feelings of human nature.—But this was not enough—an oath, it seemed, must be taken, for—

“The clergy, both high and low, as pastors of their flocks, are expected to set the example in taking the oath; and in the daily service in their churches, they must pray for her Imperial Majesty, for her successor Great Duke Paul Petrovitz, and for all the imperial family, according to the formula which shall be given them.”

Here again there was evidence of a great and good mind, for this pious Empress was determined, that perjury should be very general in her dominions, and that the example should be set by the clergy!—Mr. Sheridan then proceeded to take notice of the great and good King of Prussia with respect to Dantzic, as specified in what he called his reason for taking possession of part of Poland with his military forces.

“It would certainly militate against the first rules of a sound policy, as well as the duties incumbent on us for the preservation of tranquillity in our state, if in such a state of things in a neighbouring great kingdom, we remained inactive spectators, and should wait for the period when the faction feel themselves strong enough to appear in public; by which our own neighbouring provinces would be exposed to several dangers, by the consequences of the anarchy on our frontiers.

We have therefore, in conjunction with Her Majesty the Empress of Russia, and with the assent of His Majesty the Roman Emperor, acknowledged, that the safety of our states did require, to set to the Republic of Poland such boundaries which are more compatible with her interior strength and situation; and to facilitate her the means of procuring without prejudice of her liberty, a well ordained, and active form of government, of maintaining herself in the undisturbed enjoyment of the same, and preventing by these means, the disturbances which have so often shaken her own tranquillity, and endangered the safety of her neighbours.

“In order to attain this end, and to preserve the republic of Poland from the dreadful consequences which must be the result of her internal division, and to rescue her from her utter ruin. but chiefly to withdraw her inhabitants from the horrors of the destructive doctrine which they are but too prone to follow; there is, according to our thorough persuasion, to which also Her Majesty the Empress of all the Russias, accedes in the most perfect congruity with our intentions and principles, no other means, except to incorporate her frontier provinces into our states, and for this purpose immediately to take possession of the same, and to prevent, in time, all misfortunes which might arise from the continuance of the reciprocal disturbances.

“Wherefore, we have resolved, with the assent of Her Russian Majesty, to take possession of the above-mentioned districts of Po-

land, and also of the cities of Dantzic and Thorn, to the end of incorporating them to our state.

"We herewith publicly announce our firm and unshaken resolution, and expect that the Polish nation will very soon assemble in the diet, and adopt the necessary measures, to the end of settling things in an amicable manner, and of obtaining the salutary result of securing to the republic of Poland an undisturbed peace, and preserving her inhabitants from the terrible consequences of anarchy. At the time we exhort the states and inhabitants of the districts and towns which we have taken possession of, as already mentioned, both in a gracious and serious manner, not to oppose our commanders and troops, ordered for that purpose; but rather tractably to submit to our government, and acknowledge us from this day forward, as their lawful king and sovereign, to behave like loyal and obedient subjects, and to renounce all connection with the crown of Poland."

Now, after this, Mr. Sheridan said, he wished to know whether any robbery that had been committed by the most desperate of the French, or whether any of their acts were more infamous than this? Of what consequence was it to any man, whether he was plundered by a man with a white feather in his hat, or by one with a night-cap on his head? He said, that if there could be any difference, the solemnity with which the thing was done was an aggravation of the insult. The poorer sort of the French could plead distress, and could also say that they had endured the hardships, the toils, and the perils of a winter campaign. But here was nothing but a naked robbery, without any part taken in the calamity which gave birth to it. He had alluded to these things merely for the purpose of giving the minister an opportunity of disapproving of them: he hoped he should not hear the principle avowed. Crowned heads, he thought, were at present led by some fatal infatuation, to degrade themselves and injure mankind. But some, it seems, regard any atrocity in monarchs, as if it had lost its nature by not being committed by low and vulgar agents. A head with a crown, and a head with a night-cap, totally altered the moral quality of actions—robbery was no longer robbery—and death, inflicted by a head wielding a pike, or swaying a sceptre, was branded as murder, or regarded as

innocent. This was a fatal principle to mankind, and monstrous in the extreme. He had lamented early the change of political sentiments in this country which indisposed Englishmen to the cause of liberty. The worst part of the revolution in France is, that they have disgraced the cause they pretended to support; however, none, he was persuaded, would deny that it was highly expedient to know the extent of our alliance with powers who had acted so recently in the manner he had represented, and to have the object of our pursuit in this war distinctly known. The minister may perhaps in future come down to the house, and say he is sorry; but it has become highly necessary to interfere with the power of Britain farther, as the crowned ladies and gentlemen of Europe cannot agree about the partition of France, or that such a disposition is about to take place, that we shall be worse off than if we had let France remain as it was. Those who feared the attachment of men to French principles, argued wrong;—from the effect of the experiment they would never be popular: nothing but crimes and misery swelled all the accounts from that country. If the peasant had been represented happy and contented, dancing in his vineyard, surrounded with a prosperous and innocent family—if such accounts had come, the tidings would have been gladly received; at present we hear of nothing but want and carnage—very unattracting indeed. More danger, he thought, arose from a blind attachment to power, which gains security from the many evils abounding in France. On the same principle that Prussia divided Poland, he contended, they might act here. They declared a prevalence of French principles existed in Poland: His Majesty's proclamation asserts the same here, and is therefore, in this sense, an invitation to come and take care of us. Could such despots love the free constitution of this country? On the contrary, he was persuaded that, upon the very same principle that Poland was di-

vided, and Dantzic and Thorn subjugated, England itself might be made an object for the same fate as soon as it became convenient to the confederates to make the experiment: he would defy any man to shew the principle upon which a difference could exist with regard to us and the other sacrificed countries, in the wishes and desires of the combined powers. But supposing this to be out of all question, and that this country had nothing to dread in that respect, and that all Europe had nothing to look to but the extermination of French principles; how would the present prospect of our success then appear? Could we entertain so vain a hope, (indeed he was astonished to hear it even hinted) that the French, who had all the winter been lying in the snow at some periods, and wading up to their necks in water at others, in an enemy's country, fighting for their rights, will, in their own, submit to give them up in a mild season? The thought was too absurd, and the expectation too extravagant, to be harboured by a man possessed of a spark of rationality. It was upon these grounds he asked what were the lengths to which ministers intended we should go with the present war. From all the circumstances of the memorial presented by Lord Auckland to the States-General, and the dispositions of our allies, as indicated by their late conduct, it behoved this country to come to a distinct understanding on the subject of the nature of our alliances, and the objects of the war. This, he thought, would best be obtained by proposing a solemn disavowal and reprobation of the views and dispositions indicated in the memorial of Lord Auckland; and a condemnation of that paper. Our situation required him to be explicit on every thing that excited caution; the state of commercial credit was as alarming as unexpected; the list of bankrupts was unprecedented—as many as five hundred commissions had issued in the very short time the present Chancellor had held the seals. After

ten years peace, we had not reached our peace establishment, and our revenue had never exceeded seventeen millions. A deficiency in our revenue must now be expected, and he had heard that it was already perceptible to a prodigious extent. He hoped he should not be represented as depressing our spirits, and raising those of our enemies. In making these observations it was necessary to be explicit, and not to under-rate the difficulties we must of necessity encounter. Ministers, therefore, should not be too much elated at the great and unexpected success of our allies, and enter too easily into their views; on the contrary, he wished them to avail themselves of fortunate occurrences as soon as possible, to extricate this country from the evils of war. He concluded with moving, "That an humble address be presented to His Majesty, to express to His Majesty the displeasure of this house at a certain memorial, dated the 5th of April, 1793, presented to the States-General of the United Provinces, signed by the right honorable Lord Auckland, His Majesty's minister at the Hague, the said memorial containing a declaration to the following effect:—'Some of these detestable regicides,' (meaning by this expression the commissioners of the National Convention of France, delivered to Prince Cobourg by General Dumourier) are now in such a situation that they can be subjected to the sword of the law; the rest are still in the midst of a people whom they have plunged into an abyss of evils, and for whom famine, anarchy, and civil war, are about to prepare new calamities. In short, every thing that we see happen induces us to consider as not far distant the end of these wretches, whose madness and atrocities have filled with horror and indignation all those who respect the principles of religion, morality, and humanity.

"The undersigned, therefore, submit to the enlightened judgment and wisdom of your High Mightinesses, whether it would not be proper to

employ all the means in your power to prohibit from entering your dominions in Europe, or your colonies, all those members of the assembly stiling itself the National Convention, or of the pretended Executive Council who were directly or indirectly concerned in the said crime; and if they should be discovered and arrested, to deliver them up to justice, that they may serve as a lesson and example to mankind.'

"To acquaint His Majesty of the sense of this house, that the said minister, in making this declaration, has departed from the principles upon which this house was induced to concur in the measures necessary for the support of the war, in which the British nation is at present unfortunately engaged; and has announced an intention, on his part, inconsistent with the repeated assurances given by His Majesty, that he would not interfere in the internal affairs of France; and for which declaration this house cannot easily be brought to believe that the said minister derived any authority from His Majesty's instructions.

"Humbly to beseech His Majesty, that so much of the said memorial, as contains the declaration above recited, may be publicly disavowed by His Majesty, as containing matter inconsistent with the wisdom and humanity which at all times have distinguished the British nation; and derogatory to the dignity of the crown of this realm, by avowing an intention to interpose in the internal affairs of France, which His Majesty has, in so many declarations, disclaimed; and mingling purposes of vengeance with those objects of defence and security to ourselves and our allies, which His Majesty's ministers have so often declared to be the sole object of the present war.

"To represent to His Majesty, that this house has already expressed its sense of the acts spoken of in the above declaration; but that as neither this, nor any other foreign state, can possess any cognizance

or jurisdiction respecting them, the only tendency of menaces against their perpetrators is, to compel this country either unjustifiably to carry on war for the subversion of the present government of France; or disgracefully to seek peace, by an ignominious negotiation with the very government whom we have thus insulted and stigmatised in our public acts.

“ That these threats must tend to give to the hostilities with which Europe is now afflicted, a peculiar barbarism and ferocity, by provoking and reviving a system of retaliation and bloodshed; which experience of its destructive tendency, honour, humanity, and religion, have combined, to banish from the practice of civilised war.

“ And finally, to represent to His Majesty how deeply the reputation of His Majesty’s counsels is interested in disclaiming these unjustifiable, and, we trust, unauthorised denunciations of vengeance, so destructive of all respect for the consistency, and of all confidence in the sincerity of the public acts of his ministers; and so manifestly tending at once to render the principle of the war unjust, the conduct of hostilities barbarous, and the attainment of honorable peace hopeless.”

Mr. Fox followed; after which the question being loudly called for, strangers were ordered to withdraw.

Mr. Curwan addressed the house, and congratulated it on the effect of Mr. Sheridan’s motion. He contended that the object of it was completely gained; that Lord Auckland’s memorial had been in substance disavowed by the minister, and the old ground of the war again brought forward. He therefore, wished much that Mr. Sheridan would not divide the house.

Mr. SHERIDAN said, it was indifferent to him whether the house divided or not. He certainly considered the main object he had in view as completely gained in the minister’s explicit disavowal of the principles attempted to be introduced into the war by Lord Auckland, which must have made peace impossible.

Mr. Whitmore insisted that the house should divide, because he had no faith in the professions of ministers.

The house divided; ayes 36; noes 211. The house adjourned.

APRIL 30.

STATE OF COMMERCIAL CREDIT.

On the 25th of April Mr. Pitt moved "That a select committee of fifteen be appointed, to take into consideration the present state of commercial credit, and to report their opinion and observations upon it." This was agreed to; and on the 30th the house resolved itself into a committee upon the report; when Mr. Pitt moved, "That His Majesty should be enabled to direct that exchequer bills to the amount of five millions be issued to commissioners, to be by them laid out under certain regulations and restrictions, for the assistance and accommodation of such persons as may apply for it; and who shall give to such commissioners proper security for the sums that may be advanced, for a time to be limited."

Mr. SHERIDAN said, he admitted the necessity of some remedy, and differed only about the means. In stating the deficiency of the market, the right honorable gentleman took into his account only the loss of the consumption of France, without estimating the great quantity of our manufactures circulated through French ports to other countries. If there was not a great deficiency of market produced by the war, the manufacturers would be overstocked with raw materials, instead of manufactured goods. The true remedy for the present distress of the country, was for ministers to turn their attention earnestly to peace—not to peace with France only, but to restoring the general peace of Europe. The situation of the country, whether gentlemen liked better to call it humiliating or unfortunate, certainly was not such as to justify the right honorable secretary's mode of argument. To assert that the distress of commercial credit was owing to the great prosperity of the country might sound very beautifully, but would not be much relished in the city. It would be considered as but a poor com-

pliment to congratulate a man on his having proved himself one of the most industrious manufacturers, or enterprising merchants, by getting into the Gazette as a bankrupt. No proof was yet given that the bank directors would refuse to undertake the management of the plan proposed. Let gentlemen look at the report which recommended doing it by commissioners; they would there see that the commissioners must have an able solicitor, able brokers to inspect and value the goods, clerks, &c. &c. and when it was considered that the principal Board of Commissioners must have subordinate boards, with brokers and clerks, the committee must see that the patronage would be most extensive. The Chancellor of the Exchequer had not consulted his right honorable friend on the choice of the commissioners; and the reason was now plain. The right honorable secretary's extraordinary purity, his confidence that no man could be influenced by partialities or prejudices in the discharge of such a trust, rendered him totally unfit to be consulted. The right honorable secretary, in his own practice at the Board of Control, and other Boards with which he was acquainted, knew so well that favors were conferred with equal readiness on the friends of ministers and of opposition, that he expected the same impartiality every where else. Other persons, however, might be influenced by their prejudices, without being conscious of it. The commissioners were to judge, not only of the value of goods, but of personal security; and they might think a man unfit to be trusted, because he happened to be one of the friends of the people, whose responsibility would have been undoubted, if he had the good fortune to be an associator.—The obvious consequence of the measure would be to bring the whole commercial interest of the country into the most abject subserviency to the minister of the day; for although the remedy was said to be only temporary, people remembering the present

calamity would apprehend that such another might happen, and every person would naturally be afraid of being considered as a marked man in the hour of distress.

The resolution was agreed to.

MAY 2.

SHEFFIELD PETITION FOR A PARLIAMENTARY
REFORM.

Mr. Duncombe presented a petition on behalf of the inhabitants of Sheffield, signed by eight thousand persons, praying for a parliamentary reform; and moved that it might be brought up. This was opposed on the ground, that it was not worded in a manner sufficiently respectful to the house:

Mr. SHERIDAN said, that he should not advert to all the singular expressions of the right honorable gentleman, (Mr. Dundas) but one appeared to him to be deserving of some notice, namely, that it sometimes happened a very wise man did a very foolish thing. The conclusion which the honorable gentleman evidently wished the house to draw from this observation, was, that the present Chancellor, who made use of the expression alluded to, said a very foolish thing, and such, as in the sober hour of reflection, he would condemn.—His present situation allowed him that reflection, and he had no doubt, but that high and exalted character had availed himself of the advantage of that situation, and thought many things which he said on various occasions were now very foolish things. The noble and learned lord had formerly said that the right honorable gentleman, and others with whom he acted, had obtained the power which they now held, in a manner perfectly unconstitutional, and as a precedent highly dangerous to this country—that, the noble and learned lord, he had, no doubt, thought a very foolish observation. He had also highly reprobated the conduct of the members

of the present administration, with respect to the regulation of the affairs of India: and particularly with respect to the India bill; he had said the whole of the measure was of a nature so flagrant, that it ought to have forfeited His Majesty's ministers the confidence of the public—that, also, he now, no doubt, thought a very foolish thing. With respect to the present petition being in language not sufficiently respectful, he maintained that the Nottingham petition, to which his honorable friend alluded, was much stronger than the present; and he must confess, he suspected that the objection to the roughness of the language was not the real cause why this petition was opposed; he was confirmed in this opinion, by a recollection of the conduct of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, at the time of presenting the Nottingham petition. And as to the observation of the right honorable gentleman, (Mr. Dundas) that the house would not shew its taste by receiving this petition; he would say, this petition being drawn up by poor and plain mechanics, they had not the power of explaining their thoughts in that attack elegance of style, for which the right honorable gentleman was so eminently distinguished. Whether the petition could have been better worded to please some honorable members of that house, was foreign from the present subject of debate; but for the petitioners to have expressed their thoughts better, or the object of them with more propriety, he maintained to be impossible. They said, the house of commons is not, in the just sense of the words, what they were, from form, obliged to term it, the commons of Great Britain in parliament assembled. That was the very grievance they complained of; and they were mild in the choice of their expressions, for if they had said the house of commons at present, was not the commons of Great Britain in parliament assembled, they would not have been justified; but they went to no such offensive length

in their expressions, for they had, in the conveyance of their meaning shewed the respect they had for the house, as it was now constituted. But they went still further, for they added that they from form were obliged to term them so. That the house as now formed, was the commons in parliament assembled, was a bold assertion. Would the right honorable gentleman say they were so? These things considered, he was ready to affirm, that in his opinion, there was not a more respectful stile to be adopted, consistently with the spirit of the petition, and the nature of the grievance it complained of, and the remedy it called for. He said the language of the petition was correct; and he would ask the gentleman who objected to it, to say, they would undertake to prove it was not true; the fact was, they felt sincerely the truth of it. As to the manner in which the debate was to be carried on for Monday next, he knew nothing of it; how it would eventuate, did not belong to him to anticipate; he feared, however, from the spirit of exultation which he perceived on the other side, when that subject was alluded to, that confidence was entertained, his honorable friend's motion would be negatived. It was not possible for him to say, that it would not then appear to certain gentlemen, and particularly to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, that what was thought wise at one time, might be thought foolish at another; and that what was foolish at one time, might be wise at another. These things were explained to that right honorable gentleman by his great preceptor, the right honorable Secretary of State; and he had not the least doubt, but that they were explained to his satisfaction; in this idea he was a good deal confirmed, by the solemn silence of the right honorable gentleman. He had no doubt that parliamentary reform appeared to that right honorable gentleman now, a very foolish thing. The anticipation, however, of such an event, he was sure, would not discourage his honorable friend

in the cause in which he had embarked. And as to petitions, and the squeamish nicety which had appeared of late about receiving them, unless penned in such and such language; he had no difficulty in saying, the house would soon be compelled to receive them. He had no wish to say any thing that should tend to bring the dignity of that house into question; on the contrary, he wished to see it supported. But, with regard to the present petition, his duty compelled him to say, that if the petition was rejected, it would not be because it was disrespectful in language, but, because it told the truth.

The house divided. For receiving the petition 29; against it 108.

MAY 3.

PETITIONS FOR PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.

MR. SHERIDAN said, he held in his hand a petition from a great number of respectable factors, merchants, manufacturers, &c. of the city of Glasgow, praying for a reform in the representation of the people in parliament. He did not know the exact number of persons who had signed the petition; but some idea of it might perhaps be formed by the house, when he stated, that although the names were written very close, the petition was just fifty yards long.—He then moved that the petition be brought up; upon which, some members called out to him to read the petition.

Mr. Sheridan stated, that he conceived, by the forms of the house, a member was not bound to do more, when he moved a petition should be brought up, than to state generally to the house what was the purport of it, and what the prayer of it was; and, if it respected a matter, as to which the house had cognizance, and prayed a remedy, which

the house had power to grant, it ought to be brought up; nor could the member presenting it, be called upon to read it. When it had been brought up, and came to be read by the clerk, if any improper or disrespectful expressions appeared in it, the house might then reject it, instead of allowing it to lie upon the table. He said, he believed this petition was expressed very nearly in the same terms, as was a former petition from the same city, which the house had received; but he must beg leave to decline reading it, for no other reason, than that he conceived what had been done last night, with respect to the Sheffield petition, was contrary to the forms and rules of the house; and he wished the mode of proceeding to be brought back to the established custom.

The petition was brought up, read, and ordered to lie on the table. Mr. Sheridan then brought up another petition to the same purpose from Dumleven, in the environs of Dumbartonshire, which was also read, and ordered to lie on the table.

LIVERPOOL CREDIT BILL.

The house went into a committee on this bill.

Mr. Sheridan said he could not suffer this bill to go through the committee without making some remarks upon it. He declared he was in the habit of entertaining a jealousy of all corporations. They held their property in trust for the people of the town of which they formed the corporate body. In this case, they might completely dissipate the property of the people. It was likely they might not be very nice in favoring and playing into each other's hands.

The bill passed the committee, and was ordered to be reported on the following day.

COMMERCIAL CREDIT BILL.

Mr. Pitt moved the order of the day for the house to resolve into a committee on the bill to direct the issue of exchequer bills for five millions, in aid of the commercial credit of this country.

Mr. Sheridan said, that though he agreed to the principle of the bill, he could not help thinking that the house should deliberately consider how the relief provided by it should be administered to the commercial world. The variety of things to be done, the number of applications to be considered, characters examined, agents and clerks to be appointed, and other duties to be discharged by the commissioners, were so many bars in the way of their proceeding, that no calculation could be made of the time they must lose before they could effectually administer relief to the objects of the bill.

The bill passed, and was ordered to be reported on the next day.

MAY 7.

MR. GREY'S MOTION FOR A PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.

Mr Grey presented a petition, purporting to be the petition of certain persons whose names were thereunto subscribed, which was brought up and read by the clerk. The petition was of such length that the reading of it employed nearly half an hour. It stated with great propriety and distinctness, the defects existing in the representation of the people. It took notice of the division of the representation, or the proportions in which the different counties contribute to the total number of the representation; shewing, under that head, the absurd disproportion which takes place in a variety of instances; inasmuch that the county of Cornwall alone sends more members to parliament than the counties of York, Rutland, and Middlesex, put together. It proceeded to take notice of the distribution of the elective franchise, or the proportional number by which the different representatives are elected; stating, under that head, that a majority of the whole house of commons is elected by less than fifteen thousand persons; or, in other words, by the two-hundredth part of the people to be represented; supposing that they consist only of three millions of adults, &c. It went on to take notice of the right of voting, or the various restrictions and limitations under which the privilege of a vote for the choice of a representative is bestowed; stating the great evils and inequalities which prevail in that respect. It afterwards reviewed the qualifications to be possessed by candidates and those elected; and then considered the evils arising from the length of the duration of parliaments. It detailed the mode in which elections are conducted and decided; and, under that head, shewed the evils arising from the length of

time to which polls are protracted, from the influence of corporations, by the powers entrusted to returning officers, and from the appeal to the house of commons under the operations of the acts 10th, 11th, 25th, and 28th of Geo. III., as far as the same relate to expense and delay. The petition next noticed the mischief resulting from the defects and abuses which it had previously pointed out, particularly by the system of private patronage, and the influence possessed by peers and wealthy commoners in the nomination of what are called the representatives of the people; shewing, under this head, that, by the patronage and influence of seventy-one peers and ninety-one commoners, the return of no fewer than three hundred and six members of that house was procured, which considerably exceeded a majority of the house. The petition dwelt at considerable length, upon all the points already mentioned, and detailed a variety of other abuses, all which the petitioners offered to substantiate by proof; and it contended, by stating the great necessity there was for the application of an immediate remedy, and the high importance of such a measure; and prayed the house to take the matter into their serious consideration, and to apply such remedy and redress to the evils complained of as should appear proper. Mr. Grey concluded a long speech by moving, "That the said petition be referred to the consideration of a committee."

Mr. SHERIDAN said, that if the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Pitt), who had just sat down, thought it necessary to commence his speech with an apology to the house for troubling them at that late hour, surely, then, it might be natural that he should also make an apology for introducing himself in the present stage of the debate. He was sure that the house, in any other circumstances than the present, might expect that apology; but on the present occasion he should not make an apology, for he would not pay the house so ill a compliment as to insinuate that the members of it were not ready to do their duty, which was to hear impartially all that could be said on either side of any question that came before them. The house had already heard, with patience and with attention, much observation on both sides; it was to their honor they had done so. He felt difficulties often when he had occasion to trouble the house; but upon this occasion he could not help thinking that he stood upon very advantageous ground. He knew the advantage which the right honorable gen-

tleman had in that house, and that for many reasons, he was more likely to be attended to than those who were to oppose him ; few, if any, were heard within the walls of that house so attentively as that right honorable gentleman. But the task which devolved upon the person who had now the honor to address the house was great indeed. He knew that he and others of the same sentiments upon this subject had to speak freely bold unwelcome truths, and such as would not be heard with pleasure ; yet so deeply was he impressed with a sense of his duty, that, notwithstanding all these disadvantages, he should not shrink from the task, but would do all in his power to perform it, even in the present situation of the house. He could not be discouraged, although he knew the effect of the burgage tenures, of which the petition complained. The petition stated, and he would repeat to that house, that many of the members could only properly be addressed as the representatives of a particular person, and not the people of England. This he and those with whom he acted ought to say to a great number of that house ;—men who were either sent there by the express interference of the crown, or by individuals, at the will of the executive government. They ought to say so, to be able to render an account to the public, whose agent and attorneys they were, in order to satisfy that public that they had not neglected their duty. They were not in any case to be discouraged from the discharge of their duty ; for though they knew their numbers to be small, they yet were conscious their cause was good. The speech of the right honorable gentleman was an extraordinary effort of his great, splendid talents,—his noble and vigorous mind. He applied all his powers to this subject : he appealed with his utmost skill to the pride and the passions of the assembly. The right honorable gentleman was aware that he was addressing his auditors upon a subject that required all his art, and therefore it

was that all the art he was master of was used. It was a topic very worthy of the highest art ;—that of convincing a great number of men that his conduct at this moment was not inconsistent, although perfectly different from his former professions. He thought, however, that the right honorable gentleman would have confined himself a little more to an explanation of the subject on which so much objection had been taken to his conduct ; instead of this explanation, he had found out numberless auxiliary evasions. The right honorable gentleman now objected to his honorable friend's motion upon this subject : he objected to it, because it was not specific, or because it did not contain a specific plan ; and yet it was a little whimsical that this sort of objection should arise from that right honorable gentleman, who, himself, had made precisely the same proposition. But the right honorable gentleman told the house that he was now convinced of the impropriety of that measure : convinced of the impropriety ? What was it that convinced him ? Was he afraid that the proposal for a committee to enquire into the truth of any allegation of the corruption of parliament, might be attended with success ? What was he afraid of ? Did he fear he should be obliged to carry a plan for a parliamentary reform ? He hoped the right honorable gentleman had some reasons for this change of his mind, which were honorable to himself, although he had not divulged them. But the change of the right honorable gentleman's mind upon this part of the subject was still more inapplicable ; for he said even now that he had not totally abandoned all thoughts of persisting in some measure for a parliamentary reform ; and yet he seemed to say that he should never agree to any plan upon that subject that had not some specific remedy to a stated grievance. This was the more to be wondered at, when it was remembered that when that right honorable gentleman submitted one of his mo-

tions for a parliamentary reform with a specific remedy, he was negatived by a large majority. But when he moved it merely as a plan for a committee of enquiry, such as the present one was, he was resisted only by a majority of twenty in a full house. Whatever the right honorable gentleman might think, or might wish, Mr. Sheridan said, he, for his part, had no doubt but that a motion for a committee of enquiry was the most eligible plan that could be proposed upon this subject. This, he said, for many reasons; and one in particular, he could not help stating, which was the facility with which objections could be urged. Many persons, who were in their hearts enemies to the whole system of any parliamentary reform, might yet, for the sake of concealing it, say, If you had brought some other plan forward, I should have given it my support; but I am convinced this plan is an improper one; and, therefore, there were always more enemies to a specific than a general plan. This petition, therefore, in his opinion, was a proper one. It stated certain grievances, which the petitioners were ready to prove at the bar of that house; and he knew not upon what principle of justice it was that the house could refuse entering into an enquiry. But there was said to be a great objection remaining to this petition, from the nature of its allegation, as well as the prayer of it; for that it went to ask that which was against the principles of our constitution.—Gentlemen had laid great stress upon what they had stated in that respect; which was, that the principles of our constitution, and the whole of the system of our representation, was select; and that a system of general representation would destroy the whole of the spirit of the constitution altogether, by which representation was not matter of right. Gentlemen, in making this observation, were confounding the means with the principle—the principle of our constitution was representation; the means were selection and distribution. To illustrate this, Mr. Sheridan read

the preamble of an act of parliament, passed in the reign of King James I., in which it was stated, that the whole of the commons were present when the bill passed their house. This was always the principle of the constitution of this country. Another thing was stated as an objection to the petition, namely, that it went to the extent of asking for an universal representation. Nothing was easier than to say so; but that was not the fact;—the petitioners did not claim the right of universal suffrage. But gentlemen urged, as another objection to the granting of the prayer of this petition, the danger which would attend it; and some went so far as to say, that if there were a full and complete representation of the people in that house, there would be an end of the other two branches of the legislature; for that the power of the commons would be so great, that the King and the lords would be voted useless. Such observations he thought highly dangerous: and he must say he did not think that sentiments more mischievous than these were ever uttered within the walls of that house; and he was sure that if the representation of the people was complete to-morrow, the people of this country had too much good sense to instruct their representatives to do any thing to affect the just prerogative of the King, or to diminish the privileges of the nobility. They would not suffer their agents to do any thing of that nature, because they knew that if they did, their own power would be in danger. He would repeat it, that the good sense of the people of this country would have their own interest in view; and that if the representation of the people in the house of commons was complete, the King would be firmer upon his throne than he was even at this moment. Another objection made by the right honorable gentleman was that which arose from the danger of transacting business, in this case, through the medium of delegates. How the right hon. gentleman had, on a sudden, formed such a dislike to delegates he did not know;

but it reminded him of what had happened on a former occasion, when this subject was under the direction of the right honorable gentleman himself; they had been delegates, and he (Mr. Sheridan) happened to know this, because he was one of the committee;—and so far was it from being thought at that time an impropriety, that the right honorable gentleman determined on carrying on the business upon this very principle; and the Lord Mayor of London gave them the use of Guildhall to transact their business, and afforded them and the delegates all the encouragement he could to proceed upon the plan they had commenced; but now the word delegate seemed to be disagreeable to the right honorable gentleman. Indeed, Mr. Sheridan observed, that there seemed to him to be a great deal of insincerity in the conduct of the Chancellor of the Exchequer upon this subject. He should have told those who had now brought this matter forward, that they were not to expect his assistance: this would have been infinitely more manly than his present vacillation. He wished the Chancellor of the Exchequer would either tell the friends of parliamentary reform *when* he thought he should lend them his assistance, or declare that he never would. He had proved he was of opinion that a season of permanent prosperity was not the time. He had proved too that a time of war was not the time. Should they have the assistance of the right honorable gentleman after the war with France was over; or should we then be told, that the French being subdued, we should not suffer any alteration in our own constitution? He should either say at what time he should lend that assistance, or say that he was in the wrong when he brought the subject of parliamentary reform forward, and since that time he had seen his error, and therefore abandoned his principle. Mr. Sheridan said he had rather hear that the right honorable gentleman had abrogated it altogether, than find that he abandoned it.

only while he was minister, and that he should take it up again when he shall be out of power, because that would cast a shade upon the whole subject, and make the people of this country think there was nothing like honesty among those who professed attachment to the rights of the people; and the people might therefore despise all parties, and come to a determination of doing every thing for themselves. Mr. Sheridan then observed, that the right honorable gentleman had intimated that the people were not desirous of a parliamentary reform, and that only a few individuals had expressed that wish. Upon this occasion he referred to the speech of an honorable gentleman (Mr. Duncombe) early in this debate, and there it would be found that the honorable gentleman had said he believed in God that the prediction of the late Earl of Chatham would prove true, that a reform in parliament would be obtained before the end of the present century. It had been said that the measure proposed would be dangerous at the present moment, on account of the connection between France and this country. There could not be a more unfair argument than this, because nothing could be more different than the dispositions of the people of France and the people of this country. The one knew, and had enjoyed for a long time, a certain portion of liberty; the other had but just ousted their despotism; and therefore to refuse to inquire into this subject on that account was ridiculous. The right honorable gentleman had said much on the vigor of our constitution: he never should attempt, he said, to deny but that the vigor of our constitution produced wealth; on the contrary, he allowed that wealth rose out of the constitution; but if we persisted in not taking care to preserve that constitution by every means in our power, the very wealth it produced would be the means of its destruction; and the wealth which the constitution had been the means of acquiring was the best reason why a reform should take place. Mr.

Sheridan then took notice of the observation of a right honorable gentleman (Mr. Windham), who had spoken in a former debate on this subject. That right honorable gentleman, in the course of his speech, had said, that he was opposing those who had a wish for a revolution in this country, and not a reform. He took some time to prove that they could not lay any stress upon the representation of this country as a principle. He saw that one petition contained more names than all the electors of this country who returned one half of the members of that house. This was certainly very alarming to those who agreed with the logic of that right honorable gentleman, because he maintained that the more numerous the petitioners were, the greater was the chance of their being in the wrong; and yet again, after thus speaking against majorities, he proceeded to run down the minority. That right honorable gentleman had often been in a minority; but having lately had dealings chiefly with the majority, and consequently an excellent opportunity of shewing his judgment by dividing with the minority, he had a better opportunity of knowing their error. Having descanted upon this point for some time, he turned again to a serious view of the subject, and observed, that there were but three ways of judging of any point; the first was, by reason and truth; the second was, by majority of the opinion of those who think on the subject; the third was, force. If the first were sufficient, the other two would be unnecessary, and there would be no occasion for Government; because if man was to be governed by reason and truth, he would be perfect; and, being perfect, it would not be necessary that he should be governed; but as man was a frail being, it was necessary that he should have some government, and therefore there remained but the other two for his choice. Now of these two he believed there was no difficulty in chusing; for as we all abhorred force, we came to the necessity of

adopting the opinion of the majority of our fellow beings, and therefore the right honorable gentleman, in declaring himself in a state of permanent insurrection against the majority of the people, was not quite correct. As to the general challenge of proving the abuse which subsists in our government, Mr. Sheridan said, he had no delight in it; but as he must reply—some then of the abuses of which he complained, and of which a reform of parliament was the only remedy, were, that peers of the other house sent members to the house of commons by nomination;—that the crown sent members into that house by nomination too;—that some members of that house sent in members by their own nomination also—all these things made a farce of an election for the places for which these gentlemen were returned;—that men were created peers without having been of the least service to the public in any action of their lives, but merely on account of their parliamentary influence—the present minister had been the means of creating a hundred of them. He did not blame him,—the fault was in the system of government;—that corruption was the pivot on which the whole of our public government affairs turned;—that the collection of taxes was under the management of wealthy men in parliamentary interest, the consequence of which was, that the collection of them was neglected;—that, to make up the deficiency, excisemen must be added to the excise—this soured the temper of the people; that neither in the church, the army, the navy, or any public office, was any appointment given, but what resulted of parliamentary influence; and, consequently, corrupt majorities were at the will of the minister. He did not like to tell secrets of the prison house of the Treasury; but in the present instance he was called upon. In short, whether the eye was directed to the church, the law, the army, or to parliament, it could only observe the seeds of inevitable decay and ruin in the British constitution.

He next animadverted upon the American war, its origin, and issue: there he maintained that delusion was practised under the pretence of taxation, but in the end this country had paid dearly for the experiment of ministers. He alluded to the proselytism which had been ascribed to the views of the French nation, and of which they now seemed themselves to be thoroughly ashamed, since similar doctrines had been carried into execution, by the Empress of Russia and the King of Prussia, with regard to the unhappy partitioned kingdom of Poland. Mr. Sheridan concluded by stating, that the object of reform he and his colleagues had in view would be persevered in until it was effectually accomplished.

The House divided; for referring the petition to a committee 41; against it 282.

MAY 16.

EAST INDIA ANNUITIES BILL.

The report of this bill being brought up,

Mr. SHERIDAN contended that the holders of East-India stock were, by equity, and by the spirit of former acts of parliament, to be paid off in 1794, at the expiration of the present charter, at par, for that the public stood pledged to that effect. He wished that as this might be a question of law to be decided hereafter, there should not, at least, any thing appear in this bill that tended to decide that question, or seem to determine any thing upon it. With a view to keep the question open at least, Mr. Sheridan proposed a clause for that purpose.

Mr. Pitt differed from the honorable gentleman in this respect; he was decidedly of opinion that the public were not indebted in any degree to these annuitants, but to the company, and to whom the public were only collateral security.

The clause was negatived, and the report was read, the resolutions agreed to, and the bill was ordered to be read a third time to-morrow if then engrossed.

MAY 17.

BOARD OF AGRICULTURE.

*Sir John Sinclair moved—“That an humble address be presented to His Majesty, entreating, that His Majesty would be graciously pleased to take into his Royal consideration the advantages which might be derived, by the public, from the establishment of a Board of Agriculture and internal improvement: Humbly representing to His Majesty, that, though in some particular districts, improved methods of cultivating the soil are practised; yet that, in the greatest part of these kingdoms, the principles of agriculture are not yet sufficiently understood, nor are the implements of husbandry, or the stock of the farmer brought to that perfection of which they are capable; That his faithful commons are persuaded, if such an institution was to take place, that such inquiries might be made into the internal state of the country, and a spirit of improvement so effectually encouraged, as must naturally tend to produce many important national benefits, the attainment of which His Majesty has ever shewn a most gracious disposition to promote; and, in particular, that such a measure might be the means of uniting a judicious system of husbandry to the advantages of domestic manufacturing industry, and the benefits of foreign commerce, and consequently, of establishing, on the surest and best foundations, the prosperity of his kingdoms: And, if His Majesty shall be graciously pleased to direct the institution of such a Board, for a limited time, to assure His Majesty, that his faithful commons will cheerfully defray any expense attending the same, to the amount of a sum not exceeding 3000*l*.*

Mr. SHERIDAN said, it was the first time he had heard of its being a circumstance of degradation to pay rewards: the two following lines, which at present occurred to him, as applied to this country, expressed a very different sentiment—

Let people look, or let people say,
It always looks great, to have something to pay.

In his opinion it was impossible to give a good reason why the public should pay the expense proposed. It was said the commissioners were to act without any reward; but, for his part, he was always extremely jealous when he found gentlemen too forward and zealous to do good to the public for nothing: upon that footing the Board of Control had been instituted. He had no objection to the

principles of the motion, independently of the one he had mentioned ; and would therefore conclude with moving, as an amendment to the address, to leave out the latter part of it, and to insert the following words,—“ Provided that no expense whatever attending the same shall fall upon the public.”

The amendment was negatived, and the motion carried.

BILL FOR REGULATING THE GOVERNMENT OF TRADE.

The report of the committee of the whole house on this bill being brought up: on reading the clause to enable His Majesty to appoint two additional commissioners for the management of the affairs of India, who are not privy councillors and with certain fixed salaries, Mr. Fox opposed it. In the course of the debate it was stated that Mr. Dundas had not accepted the salary of the office of Secretary of State.

Mr. Sheridan said, he should like to know to what fund the salary alluded to had been applied ; but he did not believe he should have much information upon the subject ; nor did he see any reason for congratulating the house on that part of the right honorable gentleman's speech which conveyed information that there was soon to be a successor to the right honorable gentleman in the office of Secretary. As to the bill of his right honorable friend (Mr. Fox), to which allusion had been made, he must say that the conclusion which the right honorable gentleman wished to draw from it was wholly and entirely unwarrantable ; for he meant to impress upon the house that the influence of this bill was of the same nature, but not to the same extent, as the bill of his right honorable friend. Perfectly the reverse was the case ; and so the house must feel when they reflected on the arguments made use of against the bill of his right honorable friend when it was under discussion, for its opponents all exclaimed against it, on account of the encroachments which it made on the power of the crown, which were said to be so violent, that they almost took away

the crown from the head of the Sovereign; that, therefore, it could not be similar to this, for here the objections were to the increase of the power and to the influence of the crown. The question here put to the right honorable gentleman who brought in this bill was, upon what ground it was that he called upon the house to agree to a measure that tended to increase the influence of the crown in the manner and to the extent of appointing these commissioners? Were there not a sufficient number of sinecure places already held by gentlemen, who ought to lend their assistance to government in carrying on the plan of the government of India, without creating new offices of high emolument, patronage, and influence? The right honorable gentleman had said, that young gentlemen should be appointed to those offices, educated, as it were, in Indian politics; and then again he was pleased to pay the house a compliment by denying its laziness, as he was pleased to term it, and saying that house was never idle when it ought to be active. This compliment, he had no doubt, was well deserved, and the public would be of that opinion when they recollected that there never had been any difficulty in forming ballots, and that the public business had never been delayed on that or any other account; and that there had been one contested election unsettled for three years, for any complaint of that nature. It must, however, be confessed, that the right honorable gentleman had hit upon a very good method of improving the diligence of the young gentlemen whom he should appoint to the Board, namely, that of giving them large salaries. This was certainly an excellent spur to their industry, at least until they got their appointments. He had contrived an excellent method of instructing them too; for the India House was to be turned into a sort of menagerie for instructing young gentlemen in the science of India politics. As to the reluctant manner in which the right honorable gentleman had

accepted his various offices, he should only say, that if he found the tasks of them irksome, there ought to be something given to him to proceed in his duty on his foreign and home departments, if they were too laborious for him. The question, too, why gentlemen holding sinecures under government should bear part in the labour to be created under the present bill, was pretty well settled; for the young gentlemen to be employed might be taught in time at the India House;—the seniors had taken care of the sinecures for themselves; and the reason why these young scholars in politics should have no sinecures was pretty obvious, for the seniors had got them already. If, for instance, it was asked why one of them should not be appointed clerk of the signet in Scotland? The answer was, that was already held by the treasurer of the navy; or why one of them should not be appointed to the office of the treasurer of the navy? The answer was, that was already held by the Secretary of State; or why one of them should not be appointed warden of the Cinque Ports? The answer was, that was already held by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The right honorable gentleman, however, was a little tender upon the subject of the youth of those commissioners when he came to consider the probability of their becoming privy councillors; possibly he might have been a little prompted upon that subject by his right honorable friend (the Chancellor of the Exchequer), who himself had the good fortune to be a privy-councillor before he was five and twenty, and a relation of his at the age of twenty-three. These seniors gave away all sinecure places first; left these junior politicians to be taught their trade before they should come in for a share; and then, with the gravity of Nestors, they turned round to the house, and said, “Let us, for God’s sake, have no young privy councillors.”

The House divided; for the clause 113; against it 42.

MAY 24.

**BILL FOR REGULATING THE GOVERNMENT AND
TRADE OF INDIA.**

Mr. Dundas brought up a number of claims, which were agreed to, and ordered to be added to the bill by way of orders. He stated, that there was no new matter in the clauses, but only certain provisions upon subjects, on which there had been the fullest evidence on the table, and on subjects too, which had been in the expectancy of the house.

Mr. SHERIDAN said, that the evidence of this fact consisted solely in the assertion of the right honorable secretary; that the house was excluded from the possibility of investigation by his precipitant measures; that many of the clauses referred to subjects which were as novel, as they were material; particularly that one which regarded Nootka Sound. The nation had expended, he said, four millions, in vindicating its right to this trade; and yet, for his part, he never could discover, either that such a trade now existed, or was likely to exist. But taking the bill and its clauses into view, he knew nothing that they resembled, unless it was a stage coach, in which the inside bore no proportion to the outside passengers.

On the third reading of the Bill, Mr. Fox said, that as he had given notice that he should again object to that part of the bill which went to the creation of new offices in the gift of the crown, in order that those with whom he had formerly concurred in a vote for reducing the influence of the crown, might have an opportunity of delivering their sentiments on the proposed increase of that influence, he certainly should take the sense of the house upon it. If they still concurred with him in the opinions they had formerly professed, it became them, like men who acted from a sense of duty, unbiassed by any temporary motives, to maintain those opinions by their votes on the present occasion. If on the contrary, their opinions had changed, if they had abandoned the principles upon which he and they had formerly combated, the increasing influence of the crown, it became them, in that case also, as men who acted from conviction, to avow that change, to explain the reasons of it, and to confirm it by their votes. In no case could he conceive it to be proper or consistent with their duty and their character, to absent themselves, and leave persons who were less inclined to put a candid construction on their motives than

he was, at liberty to suppose that they were either afraid to avow the change that had taken place in their opinions, or that, if they still adhered to them, they were unwilling, on account of some peculiar circumstances at the present moment to take that part which their duty required.—Lord Inchiquin replied.

Mr. Sheridan said, that with regard to the honorable gentlemen, to whom his right honorable friend alluded, he must take it for granted, that they were all absent for very good reasons, else they certainly would be in the house to do their duty. With regard to the right honorable gentleman, to whom the noble lord alluded, the house no doubt would be satisfied to hear that his absence was not occasioned by ill health; of this he could assure the house, for that right honorable gentleman attended his public duty this day at another place, and that too on the affairs of India. But the complaint of his right honorable friend did not apply solely to that honorable gentleman, as he had himself already said, there were others whom he had a right to expect to attend upon the discussion of this business. They had good reasons, no doubt, for their absence, but until they were pleased to assign them, he must say that they had been unaccountably kept away from the house upon all occasions, when it was possible his right honorable friend should appeal to them on the vote they gave with him upon the influence of the crown: That they still maintained the opinion they gave upon that subject, Mr. Sheridan said, he had no doubt; that the influence of the crown applied particularly to the affairs of India, and that these very gentlemen had the same sentiments upon that subject, as they had expressed upon the declaratory bill of the right honorable gentleman (the Chancellor of the Exchequer.) He had no doubt either that they then considered that bill as part of a system of fraud, tyranny, and oppression. He had no doubt that if these gentlemen were present on this evening, they would have the same feelings as they had then, and that they would repeat their expressions. But, however, although the majority of that house might have

confidence in the integrity of these honorable absent gentlemen, yet the public had yet to learn the cause of their absence, and perhaps until they were satisfied of the cause of that absence, they might not be quite ready to take it for granted, that these gentlemen did their duty by absenting themselves upon the present occasion. However, when the apology came, there was no doubt it would be deemed sufficient by the public.

MAY 28.

REVENUE BILLS.

Mr. Rose removed for several revenue bills. Mr. Taylor objected on the ground that there was not time in the present session, for the proper discussion of such important business. Mr. Rose, answered, that the business now brought forward, was not of the importance supposed, and would not require the discussion imagined.

Mr. SHERIDAN said, that this mode of proceeding was highly improper, and he must say, that it appeared to him to attach blame to the conductors of it. Last year this very practice was complained of, and he understood the honorable gentleman to have been a little pledged to bring business forward early in future. With regard to the observation, that what was now to come on, was not very important, and would not require much discussion, that Mr. Sheridan said, was a point which the practice of the honorable gentleman prevented from being ascertained; for who could know, without an opportunity of judging, whether it was important or not. For this reason he should move, that these bills, and the clauses which might be offered on them, should be printed, that the house might have an opportunity of examining them properly. He was the more induced to do this, from recollecting the manner in which many measures had been passed and smuggled through the house, under the assurance of the honorable gentleman, that they were not important, which

afterwards were discovered to be so important, that the house had been obliged to explain, alter, and amend them.

Mr. Rose denied that he had caused any measure to be smuggled through the house; with respect to the bills which were now before it, he had no objection to their being printed.

PROCEEDINGS AGAINST MR. HASTINGS.

Mr. Burke moved, "that the managers of the impeachment of Warren Hastings, Esq., do prepare and lay before the house a statement of the proceedings on the trial of the said impeachment, together with an account of the circumstances which have occurred in the course of the said trial, with such observations as may tend to the explanation of the same."

Mr. Long said a few words against taking up the time of the managers in this way.

Mr. Wigley moved the previous question.

Mr. Sheridan defended the motion with great ability: he ridiculed the idea of there not being time for the purpose; and observed, that the managers had several hands unemployed at this time, and indeed, that he was unemployed himself, and should be so with regard to this impeachment until the speeches and the evidence alluded to in the course of this day should be printed; for he should not begin to think what he should say in reply before he knew what he was to reply to; the arguments, and perhaps the tropes and figures of the learned counsel for the defendant, might not require any extraordinary efforts; but he must be acquainted with facts, and the application which they made to them. He could wish, for instance, to know what sort of a reply either of the honorable gentlemen would make, without reading it, to the speech of Mr. Plover, which lasted four days. If they printed it, Mr. Sheridan said he certainly would read it, not because he was sure they had overturned the arguments of the learned counsel, or commented ably on three folio volumes, although they might think so; but that such a reply must in its nature be a curious and entertaining performance.

Mr. Sheridan rose again, and supported the motion with great force. He observed, that if the house had any delicacy upon appointing the managers to make a report upon a subject which concerned themselves personally, that would be easily removed by appointing the same committee as that whose report the house had this day received. He maintained, that when the conduct of the managers was arraigned, the public ought to have a fair statement of that conduct; there was nothing so necessary as a real statement of facts upon this subject. If, for instance, it was known by the public, that had the lords met *de die in diem*, the managers would have been ready to do so, and the whole of the trial would have been over in one session of parliament, instead of lasting, as it had, for six years. If these things were publicly known, they would have a good effect upon the public. If it was known, that in the year 1791 the lords allowed only four days for this trial—in the preceding year only fourteen days—in the whole only eighteen days for two years, the public would form a right opinion whence the delay came; and that if the counsel for the defendant had taken twenty-two days for the defence, such facts would have the weight they ought to have upon the public mind. They would tend highly to make people ashamed of accusing the managers of any improper conduct upon this trial; he wished, indeed these gentlemen who affected to blame the managers, would state charges against them, because then they could be met and regularly refuted; but insinuations were vile, where their authors would not come to a test of truth. Mr. Sheridan then alluded to certain words spoken by a high character in Westminster Hall upon this trial, that no man, except such persons as Marat and Robespierre could have conducted themselves as some of Mr. Hastings's accusers had done. If any man who breathed upon this earth was suffered to make such aspersions without being properly refuted, there

was an end to the dignity of the commons of Great Britain. He was not to be answered that these were the words of privileged person; no person ought to have such a privilege, and the higher the authority, the more intolerable the insult. The infamy of such assertions ought to be manifested to the public, that they might continue to esteem the character of the managers of this important prosecution, and have a proper reverence for public justice.

The house divided on the previous question: ayes 69; noes 69. The Speaker gave the casting vote against the previous question. The house then divided on Mr. Burke's motion. Ayes 67; noes 71.

JUNE 6.

PROCEEDINGS AGAINST MR. HASTINGS.

Mr. Grey moved, "That a message be sent to the lords to acquaint them that the house of commons having taken into consideration the state of the impeachment now pending against Warren Hastings, Esq. together with the advanced period of the session, are convinced that it will not only be impossible to obtain judgment on the several charges exhibited against the defendant, but that they cannot, without inconvenience, complete the reply under one of the separate heads thereof, in the present session; and that by a reply the charges should not be broken, the whole of which the lords have considered as one cause, and that therefore the commons desire the lords to postpone the proceeding to the next session of parliament, when the commons will be ready and desirous to attend from day to day, if they think fit, to make good their charges."

Mr. Cawthorne opposed the motion, as a measure of unnecessary delay: he thought that Mr. Grey would be well prepared at the day appointed for the reply; and he was happy to see his abilities improving every day.

Mr. SHERIDAN said, he thought that the house had heard from the honorable gentleman who had just sat down, the best reason they could have for postponing the time for his honorable friend's reply—that his abilities were in a state of improvement from day to day; this was an admirable reason for a little delay upon this business; because if that was true, he would be able to proceed with immense

advantages to the cause at the beginning of the next session. But if the trial went on at all in the present session, the managers would be compelled to proceed without means for argument, and the lords must determine without knowledge; the one party proceeding without knowing any thing of the evidence against the charge which they were to support, and the other deciding upon the evidence they had not heard, and arguments which they could not in that case understand. Mr. Sheridan argued with great force in favour of the motion, and maintained it to be impossible to do justice to the cause by coming to a reply in the present session. He maintained also that there was not the smallest colour for charging the ministers with delay, and concluded with observing, that he verily believed, that proceeding to a reply as the lords proposed upon the present occasion, would not be the cause of hastening the conclusion of the trial a single hour.

The house divided; ayes for the motion 61; noes 66.

MR. COURTENAY'S MOTION, "THAT THERE BE LAID BEFORE THIS HOUSE, THE RETURNS OF SMALL ARMS AND ARMY STORES, THAT WERE AT THE TOWER ON THE FIRST OF JANUARY, 1781."

Previous to this motion, Mr. Burch had moved, "that a list of the necessary arms now in the Tower, be laid upon the table of this house. This was withdrawn, under an understanding, that it was to be renewed on the 12th."

Mr. SHERIDAN said, he thought there were strong grounds for inquiry. It had been stated by an honorable member, that several parties of the militia had applied for arms that they were not provided with; and that there were not sufficient arms to be had for them at the Tower. He did not think that this motion was of any great importance, unless the other was revived. He had heard there was

only a stand for between two and three thousand men; if so (but he did not pretend to know) there had been great negligence somewhere, particularly at a time when there had been created so serious an alarm about an internal insurrection in this country; but that there had been no real occasion for more arms, was a proof of what he always thought, and often said, wanted no proof, that the whole of the cry of alarm was without foundation. He had no objection to this motion being put off to a future day, but he thought the other motion ought to be made also.

The house divided for the motion 10; against it 30.

JUNE 12.

**LIBEL ON THE MANAGERS OF THE PROSECUTION
OF MR. HASTINGS.**

Mr. Whitbread moved, "that a paragraph in a paper, called "The World" now read, contains reflections of a very gross and scandalous nature, and is a libel on the managers appointed by this house, to conduct the impeachment now depending against Warren Hastings, Esq." The paragraph complained of, was, "that the Archbishop of York had stated, that it was impossible for him to sit silent, and listen to the illiberal conduct of the managers; that they examined a witness as if he was not a witness, but a pick-pocket; and that if Marat or Robespierre was there, they would not conduct the impeachment in a more scandalous manner. The mode Mr. Whitbread proposed to adopt on this occasion, if his motion was agreed to, was then to institute an inquiry, in form, whether the words alluded to had been uttered, when, where, and by whom.

Mr. Dundas moved an adjournment.

Mr. SHERIDAN said, he had heard several reasons urged, which, if they had been stated to his honorable friend in the lobby, before he came into the house, might perhaps have gone to induce him to delay making the motion which he had done, but which could afford no argument whatever for slipping it over now that it had been brought forward. The chief argument seemed to be, that the matter would be forgotten, and would not go down to pos-

terity; but the contrary of this was well known, and that, in state trials, every thing that passed in the court was stated. That the words had come from such high authority, was, of all others, the strongest reason why they should not be submitted to. Mr. Sheridan said, nothing could lead him to agree to any compromise upon the subject, except the argument of feeling; but he trusted the right honorable gentleman opposite to him (Mr. Dundas) would agree to withdraw his motion of adjournment; for otherwise how would the matter appear upon the journals of the house? His honorable friend had made a motion, that the passages alluded to were a scandalous libel upon the house; and if this motion was got rid of by adjournment, they would, in fact, stand branded by their journals. If the first motion of his honorable friend should be agreed, it might be understood that no farther proceedings were to be founded on it.

Mr. Dundas said he could have no objection to withdraw his motion, "that the house do now adjourn," in order to move, "that the debate be adjourned for a fortnight."

Mr. Sheridan said, that he would certainly prefer a motion for adjourning the debate, but wished the right honorable gentleman to make his motion for adjourning the debate only till Monday next. If, betwixt that time, any proper mode of proceeding should occur to him, he would then bring forward another motion on the subject.

The Speaker said, that no amendment could be made to the question of adjournment, which must therefore be first disposed of. The house divided—ayes 8; noes 60. Majority against withdrawing the motion 52.—The house adjourned.

JANUARY 21, 1794.

ADDRESS ON THE KING'S SPEECH AT THE OPENING OF THE SESSION.

His Majesty opened the session this day with the following speech:—

“ My Lords, and Gentlemen,

“ The circumstances under which you are now assembled, require your most serious attention. We are engaged in a contest, on the issue of which depend the maintenance of our constitution, laws, and religion; and the security of all civil society. You must have observed, with satisfaction, the advantages which have been obtained by the arms of the allied powers, and the change which has taken place in the general situation of Europe since the commencement of the war. The United Provinces have been protected from invasion; the Austrian Netherlands have been recovered and maintained; and places of considerable importance have been acquired on the frontiers of France. The re-capture of Mentz, and the subsequent successes of the allied armies on the Rhine, have, notwithstanding the advantages recently obtained by the enemy in that quarter, proved highly beneficial to the common cause. Powerful efforts have been made by my allies in the south of Europe; the temporary possession of the town and port of Toulon has greatly distressed the operations of my enemies; and in the circumstances attending the evacuation of that place an important and decisive blow has been given to their naval power, by the distinguished conduct, abilities, and spirit of my commanders, officers and forces, both by sea and land. The French have been driven from their possessions and fishery at Newfoundland, and important and valuable acquisitions have been made both in the East and West Indies. At sea our authority has been undisputed, and our commerce so effectually protected, that the losses sustained have been inconsiderable, in proportion to its extent, and to the captures made on the contracted trade of the enemy. The circumstances by which the farther progress of the allies has hitherto been impeded, not only prove the necessity of vigor and perseverance on our part, but, at the same time, confirm the expectation of ultimate success. Our enemies have derived the means of temporary exertion, from a system which has enabled them to dispose arbitrarily of the lives and property of a numerous people, and which openly violates every restraint of justice, humanity, and religion: but these efforts, productive as they necessarily have been of internal discontent and confusion in France, have also tended rapidly to exhaust the natural and real strength of that country. Although I cannot but regret the necessary continuance of the war, I should ill consult the essential interests of my people, if I were desirous of peace on any grounds but such as may provide for their permanent safety, and for the independence and security of Europe. The attainment of these ends, is still obstructed by the prevalence of a system in France, equally incompatible with the happiness

of that country, and with the tranquillity of all other nations. Under this impression, I thought proper to make a declaration of the views and principles by which I am guided. I have ordered a copy of this declaration to be laid before you, together with copies of several conventions and treaties with different powers, by which you will perceive how large a part of Europe is united in a cause of such general concern. I reflect with unspeakable satisfaction on the steady loyalty and firm attachment to the established constitution and government, which, notwithstanding the continued efforts employed to mislead and to seduce, have been so generally prevalent among all ranks of my people. These sentiments have been eminently manifested in the zeal and alacrity of the militia to provide for our internal defence, and in the distinguished bravery and spirit displayed on every occasion by my forces both by sea and land: they have maintained the lustre of the British name, and have shewn themselves worthy of the blessings which it is the object of all exertions to preserve.

"Gentlemen of the House of Commons,

"I have ordered the necessary estimates and accounts to be laid before you, and I am persuaded you will be ready to make such provision as the exigencies of the time may require. I feel too sensibly the repeated proofs which I have received of the affection of my subjects, not to lament the necessity of any additional burdens. It is, however, a great consolation to me to observe the favorable state of the revenue, and the complete success of the measure which was last year adopted for removing the embarrassments affecting commercial credit. Great as must be the extent of our exertions, I trust you will be enabled to provide for them in such a manner as to avoid any pressure which could be severely felt by my people.

"My Lords, and Gentlemen,

"In all your deliberations, you will undoubtedly bear in mind the true grounds and origin of the war. An attack was made on us, and on our allies, founded on principles which tend to destroy all property, to subvert the laws and religion of every civilized nation, and to introduce universally that wild and destructive system of rapine, anarchy, and impiety, the effects of which, as they have already been manifested in France, furnish a dreadful but useful lesson to the present age and to posterity. It only remains for us to persevere in our united exertions; their discontinuance or relaxation could hardly procure even a short interval of delusive repose, and could never terminate in security or peace. Impressed with the necessity of defending all that is most dear to us, and relying, as we may, with confidence, on the valor and resources of the nation, on the combined efforts of so large a part of Europe; and, above all, on the incontestible justice of our cause, let us render our conduct a contrast to that of our enemies, and, by cultivating and practising the principles of humanity, and the duties of religion, endeavour to merit the continuance of the Divine favour and protection which have been so eminently experienced by these kingdoms."

The usual address of approbation was moved by Lord Clifden, and seconded by Sir Peter Burrell. Lord Mornington, in a long and

elaborate speech, exerted himself to prove, that the principles adopted by the French, rendered it indispensably necessary to continue the war till they had relinquished them.

Mr. SHERIDAN began with observing, that the noble lord who had just sat down, had divided a speech, more remarkable for its ability than its brevity, into two parts: the first, a detail of all the atrocities that had been committed during the whole course of the revolution in France; the second, a kind of posthumous arraignment of the offences of Brisot and his associates. As he did not perceive any noble or learned member inclined to rise on behalf of the accused, as he conceived the pleadings on the part of the prosecution to be closed, and as the Speaker was evidently not proceeding to sum up the evidence, he hoped he might be permitted to recal the attention of the house to the real object of that day's consideration. He admired the emphasis of the noble lord, in reading his voluminous extracts from his various French documents; he admired too the ingenuity he had displayed, in his observations upon those extracts; but he could not help farther expressing his admiration, that the noble lord should have thought proper to have taken up so many hours in quoting passages in which not one word in ten was to the purpose; and often where they did apply to the question, they directly overset the principles they were brought forward to support.

The noble lord's purpose was to prove, that France had begun the war with Great Britain; this, he appeared to think, he had established the moment he had shewn that Brisot and others had promulgated, in print, a great many foolish and a great many wicked, general principles, mischievous to all established governments; and this, indeed, had been the only way in which any one had ever endeavoured to fix the act of hostile aggression upon France. No part of the King's speech, it seems, more fully met the noble lord's approbation, than that in which he had warned us to keep in sight the

real grounds and origin of the present war. For his part, he knew not how to obey the call, for he knew not how to keep in sight that which had never yet been in his view. The *real grounds* of the war had never yet been explained, either to that house or to the nation; but shifting clouds had veiled them from the public eye. The noble lord, however, appears to have understood His Majesty's allusion; he recollects the *real grounds* upon which the war was, in point of fact, undertaken; that is, he knows the means by which we had been brought into this war; we had been brought into it by repeated declamations on all that the frenzy, folly, and rashness of individuals in France, had either said or written, by which the passions of this country had been roused, or their fears excited, in order to second the views of those who had determined to plunge us into it at all events; therefore the noble lord, consistently enough, imagined that a repetition of the same means which induced us to commence hostilities, was the best method of persuading us to continue them. Hence, all this passionate declamation, hence this laborious farrago of extracts and anecdotes—of extracts from a book, which the noble lord allowed every one to have read; and anecdotes, of which he admitted, that no man who saw the newspapers could be ignorant. But what was the sum of all that he had told the house? that great and dreadful enormities, at which the heart shuddered, and which not merely wounded every feeling of humanity, but disgusted and sickened the soul. All this was most true; but what did all this prove? What, but that eternal and unalterable truth which had always presented itself to his mind, in whatever way he had viewed the subject, namely, that a long-established despotism so far degraded and debased human nature, as to render its subjects, on the first recovery of their rights, unfit for the exercise of them; but never had he, or would he meet but with reprobation, that mode of argument which went, in fact, to establish, as an in-

ference from this truth, that those who had been long slaves, ought therefore to remain so for ever. No; the lesson ought to be, he would again repeat a tenfold horror of that despotic form of government which had so profaned and changed the nature of the civilized man, and a still more jealous apprehension of any system tending to withhold the rights and liberties of our fellow-creatures. Such a form of government might be considered as twice a curse while it existed, it was solely responsible for the miseries and calamities of its subjects; and should a day of retribution come, and the tyranny be destroyed, it was equally to be charged with all the enormities which the folly or frenzy of those who overturned it, should commit.

But the madness of the French people was not confined to their proceedings within their own country; we, and all the powers of Europe, had to dread it. True; but was this also to be accounted for? Wild and unsettled as their state of mind was necessarily upon the events which had thrown such power so suddenly into their hands, the surrounding states had goaded them into a still more savage state of madness, fury, and desperation. We had unsettled their reason, and then reviled their insanity; we drove them to the extremities that produced the evils we arraigned; we baited them like wild beasts until at length we made them so. The conspiracy of Piltitz, and the brutal threats of the royal abettors of that plot against the rights of nations and of men, had, in truth, to answer for all the additional misery, horrors, and iniquity which had since disgraced and incensed humanity. Such has been your conduct towards France, that you have created the passions which you persecute; you mark a nation to be cut off from the world; you covenant for their extermination; you swear to hunt them in their inmost recesses; you load them with every species of execration; and you now come forth with

whining declamations on the horror of their turning upon you with the fury which you inspired.

Sir, I should think it sufficient to answer thus generally to all the pathetic appeals to the passions, so constantly resorted to on this subject; but the noble lord, I am ready to admit, has, on the present occasion, endeavoured to ground more of argument, in one point of view, on the inflammatory passages and anecdotes he has quoted, than has been usual with those who have most practised this mode of treating the subject. I cannot, however, agree with the noble lord, that he has omitted any advantage to his case, for the sake of saving our time. In going over the pamphlet of Brissot, he tells us, rather whimsically, that he passes over this passage, and runs over that, when all the while he specifically details what he declares he will scarcely touch upon. In fact, he has passed over nothing but the question; and now mark the purpose of all this; observe the important conclusion for which, he says himself, he has dwelt so long on these facts, and I admit it to be a great and a serious one. Laying aside all question of aggression on the part of France, or of necessity on our part, to enter into the war—all this done, it seems, to shew the house that the system now adopted by the government of that country is so abhorrent to the feelings of human nature; so contrary to the instinctive love of harmony and of social order implanted in the heart of man; so ruinous to external force, as well as to internal peace, prosperity, and happiness, *that it cannot stand*. This is the conclusion which the noble lord wishes to draw from all the facts and opinions that he has detailed. I close with him. I will admit his facts. I will admit that the system now prevalent in France is all that he has called it: and what ought to be our conclusion with respect to such a government? What, but that we ought to leave to the natural workings of the discords which it is calculated to engender, the task of its overthrow: that if it will not stand of

itself, it is not necessary for us to attack it. Without disputing any of his premises, for the present, I will grant the noble lord, not only his principle, but the foundation upon which he builds it. I agree with him, that it is contrary to the eternal and unalterable laws of nature, and to the decrees of the maker of man and of nations that a government founded on, and maintained by injustice, rapine, murder, and atheism, can have a fixed endurance, or a permanent success; that they are self-sown, in its own bosom, the seeds of its own inevitable dissolution. But if so, whence is our mission to become the destroying angel to guide and hasten the anger of the Deity?—Who calls on us to offer with more than mortal arrogance, the alliance of a mortal arm to the Omnipotent? or to snatch the uplifted thunder from his hand, and point our erring aim at the devoted fabric which his original will has fated to fall and crumble in that ruin, which it is not in the means of man to accelerate or prevent? I accede to him the piety of his principle; let him accede to me the justice of my conclusion; or let him attend to experience, if not to reason, and must he not admit, that hitherto all the attempts of his apparently powerful, but certainly presumptuous crusade of vengeance, have appeared unfavored by fortune and by providence; that they have hitherto had no other effect than to strengthen the powers—to whet the rapacity—to harden the heart—to inflame the fury, and to augment the crimes of that government, and that people, whom we have rashly sworn to subdue, to chastise, and to reform.

The noble lord appears to have been aware that the number of passages he has quoted from Brissot's book, and other publications, must be considered as having no other object than to excite the mirth, or inflame the passions of the house, unless he had concluded by drawing some inference from them, applicable to the real subject in discussion;

and this, at length, he has condescended to attempt . by affirming, they all tended to prove that France not only must have been the aggressor, and England the attacked party, but that France is still the party desirous of continuing the war. But how has his quotations borne him out? That Brissot and Roberspierre, previous to the experiment on Brabant, equally wished to propagate principles of republicanism in every country of Europe. I will grant to him, if he pleases, the latter endeavored to effect it by force in Brabant, while the former wished to accomplish it by reason, and the example of prosperity which he hoped France would afford. But what does all this prove? When the noble lord, in the very same breath, is obliged to confess, that a short experience made both parties retract their opinion and practice; and so far from boasting of having provoked a war with England upon such principles, or for such purposes, the strongest reproach that either faction could throw upon the other was, in mutual accusation, of having been the cause of war with the only power in Europe, with whom France was eager to continue at peace. On this head, says the noble lord, "Roberspierre imputes it to Brissot—Brissot retorts it upon Roberspierre; the Jacobins charge it upon the Girondists—the Girondists recriminate upon the Jacobins; the mountain thunders it upon the valley—and the valley re-echoes it back against the mountain;" all facts, tending to contradict the assertion which the noble lord professed to establish by them, and making still plainer, what, indeed, the whole conduct of France had made sufficiently manifest at the time, namely, that there was no one party of whatever description in that country which was not earnest to avoid a rupture with this, nor any party which we may not at this moment reasonably believe to be inclined to put an end to hostilities.

The noble lord, however, thinks he has established a great deal, when he has proved, that all

parties in the convention were, at the same time, fond of the system of fraternizing, as it is called, or of making proselytes to the general principles of republicanism. It may be so; but it would not have been uncandid in the noble lord to have dated the origin of this system, and to have marked the provocation to it; nor unfair to have acknowledged that even this principle also has been since completely abandoned by all parties. If he refers to it, as a motive for our entertaining a just jealousy of them, he ought to admit their abandonment of it as a ground for our abandoning that jealousy. If their professing such a doctrine, was a provocation to hostility on our part, their retracting it is an opening to reconciliation. From the moment they solemnly disavowed all intentions or disposition to interfere in the governments of other nations, why should not we have renounced any intention of interfering in theirs? But instead of this, what has been our conduct? We continue to remind and reproach the French with their unjust and insolent conduct in respect to Brabant and Geneva; at the same time we adopt ourselves, and act upon the very principles they have abjured, or rather upon principles of still more extravagant insolence and injustice. Who did not reprobate the folly and profligacy of endeavoring to force upon the people of Brabant, French forms, French principles, and French creeds?—Of dragging them to the tree of liberty, and forcing them to dance round its roots, or to hang upon its branches! But what has been the conduct of Great Britain, so loud in the condemnation of such tyranny, under the mask of liberty? What has been her conduct to Genoa—to Switzerland—to Tuscany? and, as far as she dared, to Denmark and to Sweden? For her insolence has been accompanied by its usual attendant, meanness. Here injustice has been without magnanimity. She wished to embark the world in the confederacy against France, the moment she thought

proper to join it. The neutrality, of which she herself boasted but a month before, became instantly a heinous crime in any other state of Europe—and how has she proceeded? With those that are powerful, and whose assistance would have been important, she has only expostulated, and prevaricated; but in how little, as well as odious a light, has she appeared, when threatening and insulting those petty states, whose least obedience to her tyrannic mandates might bring great peril on themselves, and whose utmost efforts could give but little aid to the allies? The noble lord has, with a just indignation, execrated the *cruel* and *perfidious* conduct of the fraternizing French to the Crabanters; but will he defend the fraternity of the *just* and *magnanimous* to the Genoese?—Have we not adopted the very words, as well as spirit of democratic tyranny? We say to the timid, helpless Genoese, “you have no right to judge for yourselves; we know what is best for you;—you *must* and *shall* make a common cause, with us;—you must adopt *our* principles, *our* views, *our* hatreds, and *our* perils;—you must tremble at dangers which do not threaten you, and resent injuries which have never been offered to you;—you must shed your republican blood in the cause of royalty;—in short, you *must fraternize* with us;—you must be our *friends*, our *allies*. If you hesitate, we will beat your walls about your ears—slaughter your people, and leave your city in smoking ruins, as an example to other petty states of the magnanimity of the British arms, and of the justice and moderation of British counsels.” Oh shame, Sir! let us never hear these fraternizing principles, formerly professed by France, quoted as a just provocation for attacking her, while we ourselves, with the most shameless inconsistency, are avowing them in every part of Europe, and practising them where we dare.

The noble lord, still pursuing his anecdotes and his argument, that France must have been the

aggressor, and that the war was a war of necessity on our part, next retails to us the conduct of Citizen Genet, her emissary to the United States of America. Here again I give the noble lord his facts, and again I declare him to be equally unfortunate in his conclusion. I admit every thing as he states it, with respect to Citizen Genet. I agree in condemning the impolitic outrages he practised against the government of America;—I reprobate the indecent insults he offered to General Washington;—I disapprove of his erection of jacobin clubs in that country, his establishing consular tribunals for the judgment of prizes, &c. &c. But why has the noble lord overlooked the event of all these heinous and repeated provocations; *America remains neutral, prosperous, and at peace*; America, with a wisdom, prudence, and magnanimity, which we have disdained, thrives at this moment, in a state of envied tranquillity, and is hourly clearing the paths to unbounded opulence. America has monopolised the commerce, and the advantages which we have abandoned. Oh turn your eyes to her; view her situation, her happiness, her content!—observe her trade, and her manufactures adding daily to her general credit, to her private enjoyments, and to her public resources; her name and government rising above the nations of Europe with a simple, but commanding dignity; which wins at once the respect, the confidence, and the affection of the world. And is America degraded by this conduct, and by this condition!—Has Washington debased himself by his temper and moderation?—Has he sunk his character, and made himself contemptible in the eyes of the high spirited statesmen of Europe? Will the noble lord attempt to prove this; or will he abandon his instance and his argument? The conduct of the French, in sending such a missionary as Genet to America, is brought up by him as the strongest proof of the enmity of the French, to the peace and existing governments of all na-

tions, and of the necessity of all nations uniting against them; and the behaviour of Genet himself, is stated as an outrage too gross for human patience to submit to: and yet, the *selfish* American senate, confiding in the good sense of their fellow citizens, conscious of never having betrayed their trust, and looking only to the interests of the people they represented, found no cause for war or quarrel in the novelty or madness of French principles; and *mean* Washington, felt no personal resentment at insults which did not provoke, because they could not degrade him.

Such has been the event of two nations, viewing the same circumstances in a different temper, and with different sensations. Both had been equally insulted by this new presumptuous republic; in the bosoms of both, attempts had been equally made to spread the doctrines of that republic; both were equally interested in the preservation of the principles of civil order and regular government: yet, owing to the different counsels that directed these two nations, the Americans are, at this moment, the undismayed, undegraded, and unembarrassed spectators of the savage broils of Europe; whilst we are engaged in a struggle, as we have been this day distinctly told by our ministers, not for our glory or prosperity, but for our actual existence as a nation.

The next part from Brissot's pamphlet, dwelt upon by the noble lord, as a farther proof that the French had always intended to make war against us, was, that the minister Monge had promised, as early as October, to have thirty ships of the line at sea from Brest in April, and fifty in July; but this, it seems, was happily prevented by the vigorous measures of the British ministry; and if our ministers had not taken the steps they did, the noble lord tells us, by the bye, they would have deserved to have been whipped as school-boys, or hanged as traitors. And what were these vigorous

exertions which these vigilant ministers made? Forsooth, they stopped two corn ships in the river Thames, destined for France; and this, it seems, totally defeated the equipment of these fifty ships of the line! But here let me ask the noble lord how it came to pass, if our ministers had such intelligence as early as October, that no *naval preparations were commenced* on our part till the month of February? for this fact has been admitted by him in another part of his speech; and the lateness of our equipment has been pleaded by him with another view, forgetting that there cannot be a stronger charge brought against his friends, and that they do indeed deserve to be whipped as school-boys, or hanged as traitors, if, after receiving intelligence of the French preparations so early as October, they neglected, as in fact they did, all precautions on the part of this country, excepting the notable and powerful expedient of plundering two neutral sloops of a few sacks of French corn!

However, laying aside the merit or demerit of our minister, no proof to the noble lord's purpose arises out of this threat of the Minister Monge. The noble lord confesses himself, that no part of the promise was kept: it was, in fact, a natural gasconade of the French admiralty, at a time we were insulting them; and that the execution of such an equipment was not attempted, is much stronger evidence of their not having intended to break with us, than their having made the boast, is of a contrary determination. But it is unfortunately the interest of the cause the noble lord is supporting, to refer, on all occasions, to words, rather than to facts.

The noble lord, still pursuing his authority, Brissot, quotes that author's recommendation to the English of a pamphlet of Cordorcet's addressed to our parliamentary reformers; who encourages us, it seems, to proceed to disregard numbers, assuring us, (being well informed doubtless of our ob-

ject) that "Revolutions must always be the work of the minority. The French revolution was accomplished by the minority!" Nay, according to Brissot, it was the work of no more than twenty men! Such is the exertion that arises from the confidence of those who look to spirit and energy alone for success, and not to numbers. If this be true, it certainly is a most ominous thing for the enemies of reform in England; for if it holds true of necessity, that the minority still prevails in national contests, it must be a consequence that the smaller the minority, the more certain must be the success. In what a dreadful situation then must the noble lord be, and all the alarmists! for never, surely, was the minority so small, so thin in number as the present. Conscious, however, that M. Condorcet was mistaken in our object, I am glad to find, that we are terrible in proportion as we are few; I rejoice, that the liberality of secession, which has thinned our ranks, has only served to make us more formidable. The alarmists will hear this with new apprehensions; they will, no doubt, return to us, with a view to diminish our force, and encumber us with their alliance, in order to reduce us to insignificance. But what has the nonsense any French pamphleteer may have written, or the notions he may have formed of the views of parties in this country, to do with the question, or how can it be gravely urged, as a proof of the determination of the French people to attack us?

The noble lord having gone through this part of his detail, triumphantly asks, whether he has not established his point, and proved the *hostile mind* of France; and that the object of all her parties, was *war with England*? To which I answer, that he has proved nothing like it, and that two-thirds of the instances he has adduced have a tendency to prove the contrary. But instead of diving for their purposes in the random words of their orators, in the more flighty controversies of their party writers.

or even in the hasty and incoherent reports of their committees, let us look to acts and facts; let us examine fairly the *conduct* of Great Britain towards France, and of France towards Great Britain, from the 10th of August to the declaration of war.—Here Mr. Sheridan enumerated the various circumstances which shewed the growing inveteracy of Great Britain from the first of the revolution to the time of the King's death; the countenance given to the treaty of Pilnitz, the withdrawing of our minister from Paris, the seizure of French property in neutral vessels, the banishing of French subjects, the violation of the treaty of commerce, and finally, the dismissal of their ambassador; all which, he shewed, had been borne by the French, with a submission which nothing but their desire of peace with this country could have produced, amidst the fury and pride which actuated their conduct towards all the rest of Europe. They solicited, they expostulated; they pressed for explanation and negotiation; and even after their ambassador had been driven from this country, they sent a new negociator; nor did the sincerity of their professions for *peace with us* depend on words alone; for to preserve this object, they actually abstained from the invasion of Holland, when within their grasp, when their arms appeared irresistible, and success inevitable. Every fact spoke aloud that we forced France into the quarrel. Which party first declaimed “We are at war,” is a matter of trivial and childish distinction; nor do I, in this place, mean to argue that Great Britain was wrong in so preferring a state of open war against France, and joining in the general confederacy against her; nay, I will, for the present, grant that it was a war of sound sense, policy, and justice; but still it was a war of choice on the part of Great Britain; and from that responsibility, the minister never can, nor shall, disengage himself.

Embarked, however, as we are in the war, it must,

no doubt, be a matter of astonishment to many gentlemen, to find the advocates of ministers so eternally and earnestly laboring in proof of France having been the aggressor, and of having chosen to make war on us. The prominent point for the present discussion seems rather, under the circumstances, to be, how we shall end the conflict, let who will have began it; or if peace cannot be had, how we shall prosecute the war with vigor and success. But the object of these gentlemen, in recurring to the other ground, is obvious. They will not hear of peace; *they* do not wish for it; and finding themselves feeble in argument, to shew that the country ought to be of their opinion, they endeavor to establish a belief, that it is France who does not wish for peace with us; and this they think they do establish, by proving, or rather, by asserting, that it was France who provoked the war. If the war commenced in self-defence and necessity on our part, self-defence and necessity must continue it. They would evade the question, whether it is our interest to have peace, by arguing, that it is not in our power; from this delusion, it is of the utmost importance that the public mind should be rescued.

All the professed objects for which we went to war have been obtained; our ally, Holland, is safe; Brabant is recovered; the ideas of adding to the extent of their own country, or of interfering in the governments of others, but as measures of warfare and retaliation, have been distinctly and unequivocally disavowed by the present government of France; and notwithstanding all their lofty boasts, and insulting threats, which are, in truth, the mere retorts of passion, to our wild declamations against them, there is no question but that they would be ready to treat with us, or with any of the allied powers, to-morrow, simply upon the principle of *being left to the exercise of their own will within their own boundaries*. Let the experiment be made; if they prefer and persist in war, then I will grant,

that the noble lord will have some reason to maintain, that their minds were always disposed to that measure, and that war could not have been avoided on our part. But till then, I am astonished that the minister, who sits near the noble lord, does not feel it necessary to his own dignity to oppose himself this paltry argument of the act of aggression having come from them, instead of leaving that task to us, to whom, comparatively, the fact is indifferent. When he hears this called a war of necessity and defence, I wonder he does not feel ashamed of the meanness which it spreads over the whole of his cause, and the contradiction it diffuses among the greater part of his arguments. Will he meet the matter fairly? Will he answer to this one question distinctly? If France had abstained from any act of aggression against Great Britain, and her ally, Holland, should we have remained inactive spectators of the last campaign, idle, apart, and listening to the fray, leaving the contest to Austria and Prussia, and whatever allies they could themselves have obtained? If he says this, mark the dilemma into which he brings himself, his supporters, and the nation. This war is called a war unlike all other wars that ever man was engaged in. It is a war, it seems, commenced on a different principle, and carried on for a different purpose from all other wars. It is a war in which the interests of individual nations is absorbed, in the wider consideration of the interest of mankind. It is a war in which personal provocation is lost in the outrage offered generally to civilized man;—it is a war for the preservation of the possessions, the morals, and the religion of the world;—it is a war for the maintenance of human order, and the existence of human society. Does he then mean to say, that he would have sat still, that Great Britain would have sat still, with arms folded, and, reclining in luxurious ease on her commercial couch, have remained an unconcerned spectator of this mighty

conflict, and left the cause of civil order, government, morality, and religion, and its God, to take care of itself? or to owe its preservation to the mercenary exertions of German and Hungarian barbarians, provided only that France had not implicated Great Britain by a special offence, and *forced* us into this cause of divine and universal interest by the petty motive of a personal provocation? He will not tell us so; or, if he does, to answer a momentary purpose, will he hold the same language to our allies? Will he speak thus to the Emperor? Will he speak thus to the King of Prussia? Will he tell them, that we are not volunteers in this cause?—that we have no merit in having entered into it?—that we are in confederacy with them, only to resent a separate insult offered to ourselves; which redressed, our zeal in the cause, at least, if not our engagements to continue in the alliance, must cease? Or, if he would hold this language to those powers, will he repeat it to those lesser states whom we are hourly dragging into this perilous contest, upon the only plea by which such an act of tyrannical compulsion can be attempted to be palliated, namely, that a *personal ground of complaint* against the French is not necessary to their enmity; but that as the league against that people is the cause of human nature itself, every country where human feelings exist, has already received its provocation in the atrocities of this common enemy of human kind. But, why do I ask him whether he would hold this language to the Emperor, or the King of Prussia? The King of Prussia, Sir, at this moment tells you, even with a menacing tone, that it is your own war; he has demanded from you a subsidy and a loan; you have endeavored to evade his demand, by pleading the tenor of your treaty of defensive alliance with him, and that as the party attacked, you are entitled to the whole of his exertions. He denies that you are the party attacked, though he applauds the prin-

ciples upon which you are the aggressor; and is there another power in Europe to whom our government will venture to refer the decision of this question? If what I now state is not the fact, let me see the minister stand up, and contradict me. If he cannot, let us no longer bear that a fallacy should be attempted to be imposed on the people of this country, which would be treated with scorn and indignation in every other corner of Europe. From this hour, let him either abandon the narrow ground of this being a war of necessity, entered into for self-defence; or give up the lofty boast of its being a war of principle, undertaken for the cause of human nature.

Still, still, however, be the war a war of necessity or choice; of defence, or of principle; peace must some time or other be looked to. True; but in the present state of France, first, it is contended, that no means of negotiation can be found: and, secondly, that even if you negotiated and agreed, no security for the performance of the agreement is to be had. An honorable member behind the noble lord (Mr. Hawkins Browne) has given it as his opinion, that we, who recommend peace, ought to point out the means by which ministers may commence and carry on a negotiation. With submission, I should rather have thought it a fitter proceeding, that those who embark a nation in war for a specific purpose, should be called on to point out the probable means of obtaining the end proposed; but no such thing. Ask them, *what* their end is, or *how* it is to be obtained? the constant answer is, no matter; the war is a just war, and it is impossible to treat for peace; we know not even how to set about it; and, with this answer, we must be content to persevere in a pursuit, which all experience has proved to be ruinous, in order to attain an object which no man attempts to prove to be practicable. The noble lord, however, does not lay so much stress on the impossibility of our treating for

peace under the present circumstances, as upon the improbability of such a peace being safe or permanent. What security can we have for the continuance of a peace made with such a government as that of France? The factions of to-day are supplanted by others to-morrow; the rulers of the hour pass in succession from the tribune to the scaffold; there is nothing permanent or stable in their system—Granted. And what then are you waiting for before you will treat? Is it simply that you will have some person on a throne in France? Some first magistrate, with the name of KING, be his power what it may, before you will enter into any negotiation? I suspect that this feeling is obstinately rooted in the minds of some persons. It is not, however, avowed; on the contrary, our own proclamations declare, that though the re-establishment of monarchy in France would be a soothing and conciliatory circumstance, it is not an indispensable preliminary to the re-establishment of peace. What then is the desideratum?—A stable and responsible system of government of some sort or other, that would give a *reasonable expectation of duration and security to peace, when established.*

I ask, is any change which our arms may probably effect in France, likely to produce such a government? The *form* of it we are not to prescribe. Where are the *men* we hope to see come forward? We commenced with reprobating and reviling La Fayette, Rochefoucault, and the whole party of reforming royalists. Brissot and the republicans of the 10th of August overthrew and destroyed that party. We may boast of having assisted Robespierre and Danton in the destruction of Brissot and those republicans. Robespierre and Danton now possess the lead. Are you waiting till such men as Hebert and Chaumette shall have destroyed Robespierre and Danton? Would such a change give you the stable responsible and trust-worthy government you desire; or do you see any class of men

still under them which in the revolution of enormities gives you a fairer promise of your object? No man will hold out such an expectation. Whence then can arise the sort of government with whom you *would* condescend to treat? I affirm from only one possible source; from a general reformation in the public mind of France, founded on a deep sense of their calamities, and a just abhorrence of their past crimes. Then will cease their bloody internal enmities; then will cease the selfish, factious contests of their leaders; then will cease their revolting system of plunder, rapine, and impiety; then, in other words, will be established, their republic on the immortal and unconquerable principles of wisdom and of justice, which, without diminishing the invincible enthusiasm which even now animates their military exertions, will supply those exertions with copious and unperishable resources; and then truly we shall have no objection to acknowledge them as a nation, and to treat with them. Admirable prudence! Consummate policy! Whilst the certain seeds of internal discord, weakness, and dissolution, are sown among them, and are checked in their rank growth only by the counteraction of stronger feelings against the foreign enemies that surround them; we will not stoop to treat, because we cannot have *security* for the future; but if fortunately our perseverance in assailing them shall at length eradicate all that is vicious and ruinous in their internal system, strengthening, as at the same time it must, the energies and solidity of their government, then our pride will abate, respectful negotiation will follow, and a happy peace may be concluded—a happy peace, for the terms of which we must be left in future, for ever at their mercy! This I contend to be, if not the object, the result of waiting for that stable, responsible, and trustworthy government in France, which the noble lord demands; unless, as I said before, the operative, though not the avowed motive, for the war is simply

to establish a monarchy in that country, or perish in the attempt.

Leaving the origin and object of the war, our attention is next called to the great progress that has been made by the allies since we entered into the confederacy! Our *success* has been such, it seems, that we ought to proceed, be the object what it may. First, the noble lord asks, with a triumphant air, whether France is not in a much worse condition than at the beginning of the campaign. Unquestionably she is: she has lost some hundreds of thousands of lives, and exhausted many millions of resource; and what is more, Sir, all Europe is in a worse condition, for the same reason. But I demand an answer to a question more to the purpose, and in truth the only question which belongs to the argument. I ask if there is any one man in this house, or out of it, who thinks *that the allies are nearer to the object they had in view, than they were at the beginning of the campaign?* Let this question be fairly and honestly answered before we madly goad this nation to new exertions, and load our fellow subjects with new burdens. I meet the noble lord in his review of the state of the allies and of France at the commencement of the campaign, and at the present hour; but I enter into that review with the object I have stated before my eyes, and not to strike a balance on little petty successes which conduce nothing to the main purpose.

Previous to the ending of the last session of parliament, my right honorable friend (Mr. Fox) renewed by a motion in this house, his exhortation to government to treat for peace. We had then achieved all the avowed purposes for which we went to war. Holland was safe,—the opening of the Scheldt out of the question,—the enemy was driven out of Brabant,—we had succeeded in the West Indies,—Tobago was taken,—and Lord Hood had sailed to the Mediterranean, with a force, sufficient to ensure the superi-

ority of the British flag in that quarter. Yet all these advantages, now so vauntingly enumerated, were then held as trifles; they were treated comparatively as insignificant matters; and nothing but some important, decisive blow against the common enemy, which the power of the allies in the ensuing campaign was certain to effect, could make it prudent to think of peace. What has that campaign produced? The surrender of Conde, Valenciennes, and Quesnoy; the repossession of Mayence, and the partial destruction of the marine at Toulon. Compare this with our boasts, our exertions, and expectations, with what has been gained to the cause of France. First, the very corner-stone on which the hope of the most sanguine rested, was not (for they had before their eyes the experience of the Duke of Brunswick's former campaign), the vigor and probable impression of the invading arms; but the zeal, the numbers, and the fury of the royal party in France, then roused to action by their monarch's recent execution, and encouraged by the indignation and horror which that event appeared universally to excite. Where now is that royal party? Where is the hope which pointed to their banners? They rose indeed, and every thing that courage, vengeance, and despair could dictate, they attempted. Long and fruitlessly, they looked to the allies for assistance; at length the voice and the flag of Britain cheered their hearts, and roused their efforts; would, for the honor of Britain, we could bury the event in silent shame, and in the graves of the poor mangled victims of their own delusion and our professions. If there yet exists an eagerness for a royal crusade in England, will the British arms ever insult again the coasts of Brittany or Provence, with the offer of their protection? If there yet remains the remnant of a royal party in France, will Toulon and Noirmoutier ever be forgotten? The great body of the French royalists is

destroyed, annihilated, and with them the very strongest ground upon which we built our first expectations of success.

The next point most relied upon by the eager advocates for the war, was the state even of the republican parties in Paris. Two factions, equally anti-monarchical, but actuated by the most fell and deadly animosity towards each other, ruled, severed, and dispirited the French people. By the furious contests of the leaders of these parties, the attention of the nation was engrossed, their efforts were enfeebled, their exertions shackled, and their hopes dismayed. Observers in all parts looked for a speedy and open conflict between them; and it was confidently and reasonably expected, that the event of that conflict would inevitably be ferocious and extensive civil war. *This expectation* was among the foremost of the *resources* of the allies. What has happened? To the astonishment of the world, one of these parties, apparently the most feeble, has not merely subdued, but extinguished the other; subdued them almost without an effort, and extinguished them without even an attempt made to avenge them; whilst the conquering party appear from that hour to have possessed not only more power, more energy, and more confidence, than any of their predecessors since the revolution, but even a vigor and fascination of influence and authority unparalleled in the history of mankind. This reliance, therefore, though reckoned on at the commencement of the campaign as a host of hope, is also gone.

Again, we were told, that the system of disgusting, cashiering, and destroying all the old-experienced officers, must create insubordination and mutiny in the army, and ultimately bring down the vengeance and indignation of the soldiers upon the convention, and establish a military tyranny. Here again has ordinary speculation been foiled. The most victorious and popular generals have been arrested

at the head of their troops; a commissioner from the convention tells the armed line, that it is his will:—and incredible as it may appear, there scarcely has been a single instance, countless almost as the number of their troops is, and compulsory as is the mode by which many of those numbers are gained, there scarcely has been a single instance of a military revolt against any of their decrees. All argument, therefore, that armies must in their nature disdain the control of such an assembly, must, however reluctantly, be given up, and to that fallacious expectation, we can look no more.

But the means even of supporting these armies, we were told, could not continue through half the campaign. Arms, ammunition, clothing, money, bread, all would speedily fail. The prediction unfortunately has failed in every particular. But if our negative resources, and our hopes of co-operation in France have all disappointed us, I presume we shall find a full compensation in the increased strength and spirit of the grand alliance. Let us see.—What was the state of the allies when we entered into the confederacy? The force of Austria unbroken, though compelled to abandon Brabant; and the power of the veteran troops of Prussia, absolutely untried, though the seasons and disease had induced them to retire from Champagne. What is their state now? Defeat has thinned their ranks, and disgrace has broken their spirit. They have been driven across the Rhine by French recruits, like sheep before a lion's whelp; and that, not from the mishap of a single great action lost, but after a succession of bloody contests, of unprecedented fury and obstinacy. Where now is the scientific confidence with which we were taught to regard the efforts of discipline and experience, when opposed to an untrained multitude and unpractised generals? The jargon of professional pedantry is mute, and the plain sense of man is left to its own course. But have the efforts of our other allies

made amends for the misfortunes of these two principals in the confederacy? Have the valor and activity of the Dutch by land and sea exceeded our expectations? Has the Portuguese squadron lessened the extent and lightened the expense of our naval exertions. Have the Indian States whom we have bribed or bullied into our cause, made any very sensible impression upon the common enemy? Has our great ally the Empress of Russia contributed hitherto any thing to the common cause except her praises and her prayers? Are all or any of them in better spirits to act, or fuller of resource to act effectually, than they were at the commencement of the last campaign? But let me throw all these considerations aside, every one of which, however, would singly outweigh the whole of the advantages placed in the opposite scale as gained by the allies; and let me ask, is it nothing that the great and momentous experiment has been made, and that a single nation roused by a new and animating energy, and defending what they conceive to be their liberty, has proved itself to be a match for the enmity and the arms of the world? Is the pride which success in such a conflict has given to the individual heart of every man who has shared in it to be estimated as nothing? Are the triumphs and rewards which the politic prodigality of their government heaps on the meanest of their ranks who suffer or distinguish themselves in their battles, fruitless and of no effect? Or, finally, are we to hold as a matter of slight consideration, the daring and enthusiastic spirit, solicitous of danger and fearless of death, which gradually kindled by all these circumstances, has now spread with electrical rapidity among such a race of people, so placed, so provided, and so provoked? Be he who he may that has reflected on all these circumstances either singly or in the aggregate, and shall still say that the allies are at this moment nearer the attainment of their professed object than at the commencement

of the last campaign, I say that man's mind is either clouded by passion, corrupted by interest, or that his intellects were never properly framed.

The noble lord, however, though not inclined to over-rate the enemy, seems to have been aware that he might be driven to admit the magnitude of their exertions, and that it would be difficult to deny the efficacy of them. But that we may not be dispirited, he has a solution ready for all this ; both their *exertions* and their *success* are *forced* and *unnatural*. Another honorable gentleman indeed has told us, that if we had had only the *real* resources, and the *real* spirit of France to contend with, we should have conquered them long ago. It may be so ; but the worst of it is, they will not suffer us to prescribe to them the sort of spirit, and the kind of resources we should chuse to contend with. This may be very unhandsome ; but there is no remedy for it. They have, it is true, a great force, says the noble lord, but it has not a *sound* foundation. They have a full public treasury, but their prosperity is *unsound*. The people obey the government, but the ground of their submission is *unsound* ; in short, he takes great pains to prove to us, that they ought not in reason or nature to make the stand they have hitherto maintained ; and that they have no right to beat their enemies in the manner which they have. Their government, he undertakes to demonstrate, is calculated not to produce any such effects. It reminds me of the story of a tradesman, who had a very admirable time-piece made by a person who had never learned the business, and neither knew it mechanically, nor scientifically. A neighbouring clock-maker, exasperated at this intrusion of natural genius, took great pains to convince the owner that he ought to turn his clock out of doors. It was in vain that the man assured him, that it went and struck truly ; that he wound it up like other clocks ; and that it told him the hour of the day precisely. The artist replied, that all this might be very true,

but that he could demonstrate that it had no right to go like other clocks, for it was not made upon *sound principles*. The contest ended in his cajoling the poor man to part with his time-piece, and to buy from him, at three times the cost, a clock that did not answer half as well. I wish the noble lord would attempt to make a similar impression upon the French, and could prevail upon *them* to listen to him. I wish he could convince them that this revolutionary movement of theirs, which, however unskilfully and unmethodically put together, appears so strangely to answer their purpose, is an unworthy jumble of ignorance and chance; and that they would be much better off, if they would take a regular constitution of his choosing. If he could effect this, I should think his rhetoric well employed, and our chance of succeeding against them infinitely increased, otherwise his arguments and demonstrations on the subject here, are the idlest waste of breath possible. Experience and facts contradict him, and we smart under them.

In corroboration of his general position, the noble lord next details to us, the manner in which they have either neglected or oppressed their commerce. I have no doubt-but that all he has stated on this subject is true, and that they have done it possibly upon system. I should not be surprised to hear that some distinguished senator in that country, with a mind at once heated and contracted by brooding over one topic of alarm, had started up in the convention, and exclaimed, "perish our commerce, live our constitution,"—nor more should I be surprised to learn, that the mass of the people, bowing to his authority, or worked on by fictitious alarms and fabricated rumours, of plots, seditions, and insurrections, should have improved upon this patriotic exhortation, and agreeing that their constitution was certainly to be preferred to their commerce, should have conceived that they could not thoroughly shew the fervour of their zeal for the former, so

well as by an unnecessary sacrifice of the latter. Whether the hint of this notable axiom was taken from the expressions of any enlightened member of our own commercial senate,—or whether it was imported into this house from France,—is what I cannot take upon me to decide. The only result worth our consideration is, that however their neglect of commerce may have abridged them of the luxuries and even comforts of life, it has not hitherto curtailed them in the means of military preparation, or slackened the sinews of war.

The next proof of the *unsoundness* of their condition is to be looked for in the enormous taxes and contributions raised upon the people. The noble lord has summed up his laborious statements upon this subject, by informing us that every man of four hundred a year, is obliged to give up two hundred and twenty pounds of it to the public; in which case the noble lord, with great arithmetical accuracy assures us that he retains but a hundred and eighty for himself, (the only conclusion throughout his speech in which I implicitly agree with him), and people of greater incomes it seems, are called on to do the same. Now again I give the noble lord his facts, but again I accompany my assent with a plain question. *Do the people submit to make these sacrifices?* He has not attempted to dispute their universal acquiescence. What then do his facts prove? What, but that so devoted are the whole people of France to the cause which they have espoused; so determined are they to maintain the struggle in which they have engaged; so paramount and domineering is the enthusiastic spirit of liberty in their bosoms; so insignificant comparatively all other pursuits and considerations; and, finally, so bitter and active their animosity against the conspiring powers which surround them, that individual property has ceased to be regarded even by the possessor, but as subsidiary to the public cause; and the government which has demanded these unprece-

dented sacrifices, yet retains its power, and does not appear to have impaired its popularity.

This system of exaction is *tremendous*, says the noble lord; it is so, but to whom? to those who have to fight with such a people. He ought, however, in fairness, to have stated also, that these sacrifices and these exactions are to expire when peace has closed the struggle in which alone they originate, and the end is attained for which alone they are tolerated: till then unquestionably, the whole country of France is regarded as one great fortress in a state of siege. To tell us how little respect to private property, commercial principle, or personal privilege is attended to in such a state, is to prattle childishly; prove to us, that the iron hand of violence and necessity which has barred the course of justice, and beat down all the security of private right throughout that besieged land, does not at the same time assist the one great object which is dearest to the general heart,—successful resistance to the besiegers.

The noble lord, however, not content with the unfairness of overlooking all the circumstances which imperious necessity must inevitably impose upon a country circumstanced as France is, thinks it fair and candid to contrast the proceedings of their convention on the subject of supply and finance, with the proceedings of the British minister and of the British parliament! *We*, it seems, assist commerce instead of oppressing it. *We* lend the credit of the public Exchequer to our private merchants: and for the means of carrying on the war, not even voluntary contributions are expected, unless it be in little female keepsakes for the army, of gloves, mittens, nightcaps and under waistcoats. Certainly the contrast between the French means of supply and ours is obvious, and long may it continue so. But the noble lord pursues his triumph on this subject too far; not content with simply alluding to it, which one would have imagined would have an-

answered all his purposes, he endeavours to impress it more forcibly on our minds, by making a regular speech for our Chancellor of the Exchequer, and exultingly demanding what we should say, if his right honorable friend (Mr. Pitt), were to come down and propose to the British parliament, such ways and means as the minister of finance in France is compelled to resort to? What should we think if he were to rise and propose, that all persons who had money or property in an unproductive state should lend it without interest to the public? If he were to propose, that all who had saved incomes from the bounty of the state should refund what they had received? What, finally, if all persons possessing fortunes of any size, were called upon to give up the whole during the war, or reserve to themselves only the means of subsistence, or at the utmost one hundred and eighty pounds a year? Upon my word, Sir, I agree with the noble lord, that if his right honorable friend was to come down to us with any such proposition, he would not long retain his present situation. And with such a consequence inevitable, he need not remind us, that there is no great danger of our Chancellor of the Exchequer making any such experiment, any more than of the most zealous supporters of the war in this country, vying in their contributions with the abettors of republicanism in that. I can more easily fancy another sort of speech for our prudent minister. I can more easily conceive him modestly comparing himself and his own measures with the character and conduct of his rival, and saying—"Do I demand of you, wealthy citizens, to lend your hoards to government without interest? On the contrary, when I shall come to propose a loan, not a man of you to whom I shall not hold out at least a job in every part of the subscription, and an usurious profit upon every pound you devote to the necessities of your country. Do I demand of you, my fellow placemen and brother pensioners, that you should sacri-

fice any part of your stipends to the public exigency; on the contrary, am I not daily increasing your emoluments and your numbers in proportion as the country becomes unable to provide for you? Do I require of you, my latest and most zealous proselytes, of you who have come over to me for the special purpose of supporting the war—a war on the success of which you solemnly protest, that the salvation of Britain, and of civil society itself, depend. Do I require of you, that you should make a temporary sacrifice in the cause of human nature of the greater part of your private incomes? No, gentlemen, I scorn to take advantage of the eagerness of your zeal, and to prove that I think the sincerity of your zeal and attachment to me needs no such test, I will make your interest co-operate with your principle; I will quarter many of you on the public supply, instead of calling on you to contribute to it, and while their whole thoughts are absorbed in patriotic apprehensions for their country, I will dextrously force upon others the favorite objects of the vanity or ambition of their lives.”

Sir, I perceive that the house feel that I have made a speech more in character for the right honorable gentleman, than the noble lord did; that I have supposed him simply to describe what he has been actually doing; but I am much mistaken, if they do not at the same time think it rather indiscreet in the noble lord to have reminded us of such circumstances. Good God, Sir, that he should have thought it prudent to have forced this contrast upon our attention; that he should triumphantly remind us of every thing that shame should have withheld, and caution would have buried in oblivion! Will those who stood forth with a parade of disinterested patriotism, and vaunted of the *sacrifices* they had made, and the *exposed situation* they had chosen, in order the better to oppose the friends of Brissot in England—will they thank the noble lord for reminding us how soon these lofty professions

dwindled into little jobbing pursuits for followers and dependants, as unfit to fill the offices procured for them, as the offices themselves were unfit to be created? Will the train of newly titled alarmists, of supernumerary negociators, of pensioned paymasters, agents and commissaries, thank him for remarking to us how profitable their panic has been to themselves, and how expensive to their country? What a contrast, indeed, do we exhibit? What in such an hour as this, at a moment pregnant with the national fate, when, pressing as the exigency may be, the hard task of squeezing the money from the pockets of an impoverished people, from the toil, the drudgery of the shivering poor, must make the most practised collector's heart ache while he tears it from them. Can it be, that people of high rank, and professing high principles, that *they* or *their families* should seek to thrive on the spoils of misery, and fatten on the meals wrested from industrious poverty? Can it be, that this should be the case with the very persons who state the *unprecedented peril of the country* as the sole cause of their being found in the ministerial ranks? The constitution is in danger, religion is in danger, the very existence of the nation itself is endangered; all personal and party considerations ought to vanish; the war must be supported by every possible exertion and by every possible sacrifice; the people must not murmur at their burdens, it is for their salvation their all is at stake. The time is come, when a honest and disinterested men should rally round the throne as round a standard;—for what? ye honest and disinterested men, to receive for your own private emolument, a portion of those very taxes which they themselves wring from the people, on the pretence of saving them from the poverty and distress which you say the enemy would inflict, but which you take care no enemy shall be able to aggravate. Oh! shame! shame! is this a time for selfish intrigues, and the little dirty traffic for lucre and emolument?

lument ? Does it suit the honor of a gentleman to ask at such a moment ? Does it become the honesty of a minister to grant ? Is it intended to confirm the pernicious doctrine so industriously propagated by many, that all public men are impostors, and that every politician has his price ? Or even where there is no principle in the bosom, why does not prudence hint to the mercenary and the vain to abstain a while at least, and wait the fitting of the times ? Improvident impatience ! Nay, even from those who seem to have no direct object of office or profit, what is the language which their actions speak ? The throne is in danger ! we will support the throne ; but let us share the smiles of royalty ; the order of nobility is in danger ! I will fight for nobility, says the viscount, but my zeal would be much greater if I were made an earl. Rouse all the marquis within me, exclaims the earl, and the peerage never turned forth a more undaunted champion in its cause than I shall prove. Stain my green riband blue, cries out the illustrious knight, and the fountain of honor will have a fast and faithful servant. What are the people to think of our sincerity ?—What credit are they to give to our professions ?—Is this system to be persevered in ? Is there nothing that whispers to that right honorable gentleman that the crisis is too big, that the times are too gigantic, to be ruled by the little hackneyed and every-day means of ordinary corruption ?—Or are we to believe, that he has within himself a conscious feeling that disqualifies him from rebuking the ill-timed selfishness of his new allies ? Just previous, indeed, to the measure which bespoke the pre-determination of our government for war, he deigned himself to accept a large sinecure place ; even *he*, who at the commencement of his political career, lamented that he had fallen on times too good, too uncorrupt, to mark with effect the contrast of his own political disinterestedness, took to himself, at the period I mention, a great sinecure office, swelled by an additional pension, and both for life : the cir-

cumstances has never been commented on in parliament, though perhaps there are those who do not exactly think his public service underpaid by the remuneration. But if the acceptance of such a boon, at such a time, is to be regarded by him as a pledge and contract that he is never in future to consider himself entitled to an unpurchased support on the subject of this war, or to resist the mercenary claims of any proselyte, which his arguments or his example may create—inauspicious, indeed, was the moment in which his own disinterestedness was surprised by the bounty of his sovereign, and far more lamentable to his country, the consequences of that gift, than advantageous to himself.

Can we too seriously reflect, that in the contest in which we are engaged, we have avowedly staked the Being of the British empire? This *Bellum Internicinum*, as it was rashly named by those who advised, and into which I fear it has been more rashly converted, by those who have conducted it, is to be prosecuted at every risk. If we fail—we fall;—so circumstanced, the hour *may* come, in which we may be compelled to look for a loftier spirit, a firmer energy, and a more enthusiastic attachment to the frame and form of our constitution, than ever yet has been demanded by our government from the people governed. Let the minister take care, if such an hour *should* come, that we do not look in vain. Let him take care that the corruptions of the government shall not have lost it the public heart; that the example of selfishness in the few, has not extinguished public spirit in the many. Let him not be too confident that his informers, his associations, his threats, his proclamations, or prosecutions, have driven from their post, or silenced the observations of those who honestly and lawfully watch the conduct of the *king's servants* in their stations, and of *their own servants* in this house, and who hold a corrupt collusion between them to be in itself an overthrow of the constitution. If we would

have the people ready with one will, should the trying necessity arise, to risk and to sacrifice every thing for the safety of the constitution, and the independence of their country, let the high example come from those in high situations, and let it be as manifest as the danger that no part of their subsistence has been wrung from them on a specious pretence, and applied in fact, to increase the wages of corruption, or swell the price of political apostacy.

But if neither public interest, nor political prudence, sway the mind of the right honorable gentleman, I wonder that a feeling of personal pride has not, in some measure, deterred him from the selection he has made of the late objects of his patronage, his favor, and his confidence. What a compliment has he paid to all his former connections and attachments! and in what a light has he held out their pretensions and abilities to the world! possessing opportunity and sagacity to discern and estimate the claims of worth and talents, he has long been in a situation to attach to him a numerous body of respectable friends, whose fortunate concurrence in his opinion has been both steady and uniform. Could he not find among them all, any persons fit for the many situations of trust and emolument which he has lately appointed to or created, or worthy the honors which he has recently advised his forgiving sovereign to bestow? No, it seems that *from this side of the house alone*, the country could be properly served, or the favors of the crown duly repaid!

(Mr. Sheridan here recapitulated, and remarked on a number of favors, offices, and appointments, all bestowed on gentlemen lately in opposition; among these he was supposed to allude to Lord Loughborough, Lord Carlisle, Lord Porchester, Lord Hertford, Lord Malmsbury, Lord Yarmouth, Sir Peter Burrell, Sir Gilbert Elliot, Mr. Sylvester Douglas, Mr. Anstruther, Mr. John Erskine, &c. &c.)

Was there ever, let me ask, a greater triumph than the list I have run through, presents to those who yet remain on this side of the house, and who yet feel for the original credit of the party which these gentlemen have quitted? Of that coalition party, which has been so long and so vehemently traduced, both for its principles and its origin? Can it be, that this execrable faction, which, in the year 1784, was accused by the very man who then was, and still is minister, by all his adherents, and, through their arts, even by the country at large, of the most rooted malignity to the constitution of this kingdom of endeavouring to enslave the house of commons, to disgrace the house of lords, to make a cypher of the King, and to introduce a fourth estate, which was to throw the power and patronage of the whole Empire into their hands, and make their tyranny immortal—that this same party, who, at the time of the regency, were again accused, under the same authority, of being actuated by an insatiate love of office and emolument alone, and of basely preferring the views of their own selfish and rapacious ambition to every sentiment of loyalty, to the first privileges of the commons, and even to the internal peace of the country.—Can it be that this arraigned, proscribed, and reprobated party, so characterized and stigmatized by the right honorable gentleman and his followers, should have contained all the while within its ranks the only men, who, when the trying hour of proof arrived, were fit to maintain the vigor of the constitution, assert the honor of the peerage, and prop the pillars of the throne? O! if this be so, what a lesson ought it to be to those who listen to the venal libels and calumnies of a ministerial press! What a warning to their credulity in future, when they recollect that these very gentlemen, to whom principally, it seems, the country is indebted for the detection of all the plots, conspiracies, and insurrections which so lately threatened the overthrow of the state, as well as for

that salutary preventive against all future ills of the present war, that these very personages were not only never excepted in the outrageous libels which so long assailed the party to which they so lately belonged, but were many of them the marked and principal objects of their venom and malignity! Trusting that such a lesson will arise from reflecting on this fact, I quit the subject; adding only, that I should much regret the being supposed to impute any sinister or improper motives to the conduct of any of these gentlemen, or by any means to deny that the emoluments and honors they have received, were other than the consequences of their conversion to superior wisdom and integrity of the present minister, and in no respect the allurements to that conversion; but still, Sir, I must take the freedom to observe, that in order to have prevented a doubt, in these mistrustful times, arising in the public mind upon the subject, from the odd concurrence of circumstances, and considering the pressure and magnitude of the plea, on which alone they have justified their separation from former and long-cherished connections, it would have been better both for their own credit, and as an example to the people, to have rendered it impossible even for malice to suggest any other inducement for the part they took, than a strong sense of public duty, and a clear and disinterested apprehension for the general safety.

His Majesty laments the burdens that are to be laid on his people, and yet ministers lavish in courting, nay purchasing deserters by the most shameful prostitution of the national treasure; I take it for granted that they have been forced thus to look to the other side, because the nursery for statesmen formed by the Secretary of State opposite to them, has not yet reared a sufficient number of plants for the necessary consumption; I dare say, that though our Chiron is slow in his march, he will improve as he goes on; and perhaps this year we shall be called upon for an additional sum of money to turn the

nursery into a hot-bed. It is said, that if we were desirous of making peace, we have not the means. With whom do we treat? I answer, with the men that have the power of the French government in their hands. I never will disdain to treat with those on whom I make war; and surely no wise nation ought to persevere in the idle disdain of a negotiation with those that are a match for them in war. A right honorable gentleman opposite said, that what made him first think of a negotiation with America, was his looking at General Washington's army; he had looked at it on the right, on the left, on the centre, and according to his curious phrase, he could not accommodate himself any where. The same was surely true of France; we had tried it on all sides; on the South at Toulon, on the West by the Rhine, on the North by Flanders, on the East by our spying glasses, at St. Maloes, and we could nowhere be accommodated. But I see, notwithstanding our fatal experiment, we are doomed to go on, the fatal determination is taken, and there is no rational hope that the good sense and spirit of this house will reverse the decree.

Mr. Sheridan proceeded to a review of the proceedings of the campaign, to shew that government had not displayed a single exertion becoming the dignity of the nation, or calculated either to maintain the splendor of our name and arms, or to accomplish the object of the war. There had been great misconduct on the part of those who had the power of directing our forces. No one vigorous exertion of prudence or wisdom had been made; however, fortune, in some respects, had been favorable to us. We fortunately escaped hostilities with America: the risk, however, of such an event, was hereafter to be enquired into. For what purpose, he asked, was a large fleet kept in the Mediterranean, after the capture of Toulon, while we wanted its assistance in other parts of the world—whilst a French frigate rode triumphant along the coast of

America. And after the engagement between this and an English frigate, in which our gallant captain (Courtenay) lost his life, what must have been the feelings of the crew, to find that no vengeance has been taken for his death ?

Mr. Sheridan shewed that even in the points of our attack, particularly at Toulon, Dunkirk, &c. &c. we had seen nothing but incapacity and blunder in the execution, as well as disaster in the event. These things must be the subject of parliamentary investigation. It was not enough that our precipitate retreat from Dunkirk was hushed up and compromised between the Master-General of the Ordnance and first Lord of the Admiralty, because one of them was brother to the minister. And with respect to the transactions of Toulon, without stopping to inquire whethert he destruction of the ships was consistent with the laws of war, he would demand by whose orders the constitution of 1789 was first offered to the people, and by whose orders that offer was broken to them ; and it must be a subject of inquiry how the noble Lord Hood, who had so freely taxed General O'Hara with not keeping his word, had himself broken his word to the nation, about the strength and resistance of the place. The execution of the plan for the destruction of the ships, he would prove, was mismanaged in all that depended on the part of Lord Hood ; for at the Babel council of the combined armies, an offer was made to undertake the destruction of these ships, which appears to have been accepted ; and yet such an inadequate force was given for the purpose, as to oblige Sir Sidney Smith to leave 15 ships of the line unconsumed. He reproached them also for the expedition of Earl Moira, which was talked of so long as to deliver over all the unhappy royalists on the coast to massacre. The expedition of Sir Charles Grey had been equally ruined by protraction ; and with respect to the whole of our naval campaign, it was in vain to enter into the details ; for no man

could with truth assert, that we had any where presented a formidable aspect to the enemy. Of the conduct of the channel fleet he would not say one word; he was sure that the noble admiral had exerted his utmost talents in the service, though they all knew the industrious pains that had been taken to throw unmerited reproach upon him. That our trade had not been protected, the fact of the channel being now, or very lately, at the mercy of a few French frigates, was a most glaring proof.

All these things, he thought, it a duty he owed his constituents to inquire into, that it might appear what our objects were in pursuing the present war, and what were the objects of our allies. From some late transactions, it was very evident that our worthy allies had objects very different from what this country could possibly be supposed to have in view. He said, that he did not mean to propose any amendment; he should be inclined to support, however, any amendment that went to declare that this house ought to treat for a peace, whenever an opportunity for that purpose presented itself.

Mr. Fox moved an amendment to the address, "to recommend to His Majesty to treat, as speedily as possible, for a peace with France upon safe and advantageous terms, without any reference to the nature or form of the government that might exist in that country."—The house divided: for the address, without the amendment 277; against it 59.

JANUARY 27.

HESSIAN TROOPS AND MINISTERIAL JOBS.

Mr. Dundas presented the following message from His Majesty.—"George R. His Majesty thinks it proper to acquaint the house of commons, that a corps of Hessian troops, taken into the pay of Great Britain, to be employed on foreign service, having been brought to the appointed place of rendezvous off the Isle of Wight, His Majesty has found it necessary, with a view to the preventing any sickness taking place among the said troops from their continuance on board of the transports, to order them to be disembarked, and to be stationed for the present, on the Isle of Wight, at Portsmouth, and at places adjacent. G. R."

Mr. SHERIDAN asked, if those were the troops. destined for the expedition against France under the Earl of Moira?

Mr. Sheridan gave notice, that on Wednesday next, he would move for several papers containing the estimate of commissions since the war, or ministerial jobs as they were called, for the purpose of founding a serious accusation against His Majesty's ministers.

The Speaker acquainted him, that Wednesdays were appropriated to the public business of the supplies, in the same manner as during the last session.

Mr. Pitt thought it would be fairer if Mr. Sheridan had stated his evidence in the charge before he mentioned the application.

Mr. Sheridan confessed, that he had not yet made up his mind as to the quantity of papers he should move for, though he fancied there could be no obstacle to their production. But as the minister seemed sore at the mention of the word jobs, he would point out, among other things, the staff for Toulon, the staff for Lord Moira's expedition, and would, perhaps, have occasion to remark upon those very Hessians who had already invaded England before they proceeded to the invasion of France!

Mr. Fox said, that as many of the papers wanted may be included in the army estimates, it would be proper to defer the motion till they were upon the table.

The Speaker observed, that this would probably be produced according to custom at an early hour to-morrow morning.

Mr. Sheridan agreed, in that case, to make his motion to-morrow.

Mr. Pitt could not help remarking on the modesty of Mr. Sheridan, who, though he could not make up his own mind as to the papers he intended to move for, thought it extremely reasonable that he should at once decide on the propriety of their production.

The house adjourned.

JANUARY 28.

MR. SHERIDAN'S MOTION FOR PAPERS CONTAINING THE ESTIMATE OF COMMISSIONS SINCE THE WAR, FOR THE PURPOSE OF FORMING A CHARGE AGAINST MINISTERS.

Mr. SHERIDAN rose; he said, in pursuance of notice he gave yesterday, and in compliance with the impatience which the Chancellor of the Exchequer manifested, or seemed to manifest, to hear his motion; upon which, he apprehended there could be no discussion, since from the temper of the right honorable gentleman, as it appeared when the notice was given, he could not help agreeing to what would be moved to day. For, as it was the first duty of that house to enquire into the application of the public money; so it was the interest of every minister, supposing him to be fair in his conduct, and clear in his accounts, to permit the enquiry, and at no time in the history of this country was enquiry more necessary than at present. We had heard in the speech of the sovereign, information of the most important nature to the people of this country. Very soon the Chancellor of the Exchequer would have to bring forward his budget—that would be an awful and trying day; he feared it would then appear that the surplus of the revenue which had been so much boasted of, and the application of it for the reduction of our debt, whatever be the merit of the plan, would all at once be swept away, and with it would vanish that pleasing prospect of alleviating the hardships of the people by a reduction of the taxes. All that cheering hope, too, of reducing our peace establishment, as well as the reduction of our debt, and the alleviation of our burthens, which had, year after year, been held out to us, and which, year after year, we had waited for in vain, would vanish; for if peace was concluded to-morrow, a vast number of years must pass away

before we could even hope to be in the same situation as at the commencement of the war. Then we must say, it was the first duty of that house to take care not one sixpence should be idly squandered by the minister, nor any thing done which would diminish one morsel of the meal of the laborer and distressed family; or that any thing should be permitted that tended to wring from the poor any part of their pittance. Yesterday he made use of the word job, as applicable to some part of the minister's conduct, with respect to appointments to certain offices under government, since the commencement of the war. The minister, in his simplicity and innocence, seemed not to comprehend what a job was. It was certainly not a very elegant, but it was a very intelligible term; but if the right honorable gentleman wanted an explanation of it, he should give one. Whenever any emolument, profit, salary, honor, or favor, of any kind whatever, was conferred on any person, be he who he may, or his character what it may, unless he has gone through a public service, or necessary public duty, adequate to what he receives, that is a job—if from any private friendship, personal attachment, or any other view than the interest of the public, any person is appointed to any office in the public service, when any other person is known to be fitter for the employment, that is a job; and that, among other things, made him submit this motion to the house. They should not altogether refer him to the army extraordinaries; for although there was a good deal of information to be had from them, yet there was not enough. It was painful to him, in the course of his observations, to be compelled to enumerate persons for whom he had a personal respect; but his duty commanded him to do so: the situation of Sir Gilbert Elliot at Toulon, for instance 1,500*l.* a year; of John Erskine, 1,300*l.* and the cases of many others. Perhaps the Chancellor of the Exchequer would be able to prove all

this was well earned, and the public ought to pay it; but that was matter for discussion on a future day. He then read his resolutions, the substance of which were,—

“ An account of the expenses incurred by the employment of counsel, &c. relative to the affairs of India, in assisting and advising the Board of Control, from the date of the board down to the present time.

“ An account of the salary now enjoyed by John Anstruther, Esq. as counsel for the board.

“ An account of the half pay, or pension, or emolument in lieu of half pay, to John Erskine. Esq. for his services at Toulon, &c.

“ An account in the same way, to Joseph Dornford, Esq. for his intended expedition to the coast of France.

“ An account of the salary, emolument, half pay, &c. to Sir Gilbert Elliot, for his services at Toulon, &c.

“ An account of the expense in consequence of the mission of Lord Yarmouth, to the King of Prussia, &c.

“ An account of the salary of Lord Malmsbury, for his late mission, &c.”

Mr. Sheridan then said he had a few more, which he should be obliged to add to this list, but he could not move them to-day.

The question on the first motion was put and carried—On putting the second, Mr. Anstruther said he had no salary from the Board of Control; this motion was then withdrawn: others were put and carried. On reading that relating to Lord Yarmouth, his lordship stated he had received nothing for having acted in the character of envoy extraordinary to His Prussian Majesty, excepting his real expenditure.

Mr. Sheridan said he entertained an opinion before he had made his motion, that the Earl of Yarmouth had received no salary; and he wished the other gentlemen had followed so laudable an example.

Mr. Fox observed, he was as much convinced before this motion was made as he was then, that the noble earl received nothing; but, if his honorable friend had not moved with respect to him, His Majesty's ministers might have said, Why have you passed by the Earl of Yarmouth? Why have you made an exception to him?

Mr. Burke admitted it was the duty of the house to watch the public purse with an anxious eye, but thought some evidences of guilt should ever precede suspicion, which was evidently not the case, in the instance of Lord Yarmouth and Mr. Anstruther; and that the best way of preserving the effect of public enquiry was, not to exert it on slight or ill-founded occasions. He observed too, that Mr. Sheridan's profession of good-will towards the individuals concerned, and distinction between the jobber and the jobbed, were not strictly defensible; as the man who took on him a corrupt place, was as bad as he who corruptly bestowed it. He meant not to condemn the inquisitorial functions of the house; but he thought a trivial and vexatious jealousy as pernicious as languor and negligence.

Mr. Sheridan repeated his assertion of good will towards the individuals concerned.

Mr. Pitt said, "Will the honorable gentleman now persevere in his assertion, that he is only influenced by motives of good will towards the individuals concerned, in bringing forward his motions? and if he does, can he imagine that any member in this house will credit it?"

Mr. Sheridan was rising to reply, when

Mr. Fox prevented him, declaring, that in his opinion, founded on experience, Mr. Sheridan had as much personal credit in that house, as Mr. Pitt.

Mr. Sheridan said, he was glad he had been prevented rising, on the first impression Mr. Pitt's question had made on him, as he might, perhaps, in the warmth of the moment, have said something unpalatable. "Whether," said he, "if I repeat my assertion, any member of this house will doubt it or not, I cannot be certain; but I believe it is in this house alone that the right honorable gentleman will venture to tell me so."

Mr. Stanley reprobated personalities; he thought so serious a question ought to be debated with its proper and consistent dignity.

Mr. Yorke thought it was hard for the members of that house, sent up from the country to mind the business of their constituents, to be obliged to listen to such nonsense, for such it certainly was, compared to the more important business of the nation.

Mr. Sheridan then added the following motion :—

“ That there be laid before the house, an account of the application and expenditure of the sum of five thousand pounds, and eleven thousand pounds, which, by an act of the last session of parliament, were occasioned to be expended for the Board of Control.”

This was put and carried.

JANUARY 29.

NAVAL POWER FOR 1794.

The house having resolved itself into a committee, the following resolution was read, “ That it is the opinion of this committee, that eighty-five thousand men be granted to His Majesty, for the sea service for the year 1794, including twelve thousand one hundred and fifteen marines.”

Mr. SHERIDAN said he should, as his right honorable friend (Mr. Fox) had done, decline giving any opposition to the resolution before the committee. He wished to make a few observations, in which he should endeavour to be as concise as possible. With regard to the capture of Toulon, he was apprehensive that it would be the greatest curse this country ever experienced; for he did not doubt but the French, who were suffering their navy to decline, would be roused thereby, and the capture of Toulon would become the regeneration of the French fleet; and should they execute their threats by sea, in the same manner they had done by land, he feared we should not have a great deal to boast of in the next naval campaign. He had heard much of the negotiations for the surrender of Toulon; but by what had fallen from the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Pitt) the Toulonese were induced to surrender by famine, not by loyalty;—by necessity, not by choice. One assertion, made by the right honorable Secretary of State, (Mr. Dundas) was, that Halifax, in Nova Scotia, was in

a respectable state of defence. He had a letter, which he produced, and which he said came from authority on which he could depend, stating the place to be in the most wretched condition. He read the letter, which was dated the 7th of December, 1793. "It stated the distressed state of the inhabitants, from the want of a proper naval force; that every ship which had sailed from thence, for some time past, had fallen into the hands of the enemy; that the Ambuscade French frigate, had been permitted to scour the coast, and had fitted out, as armed vessels, several of her prizes, to cruise against the trade; that Admiral Soufflet, with three ships of the line, had been on that coast—that it had been his intention to take St. Peter's and Cape Breton, and winter at Louisbourg, and pay them a visit in the spring; and then he could meet no opposition; their whole force consisting in two companies of artillery, two of foot, 300 raw recruits, and one small ship of war;—that the peace establishment of the settlement was to be one 50 gun ship, three frigates, and two ships of war; four regiments of foot, three of artillery; that the people of that country were as loyal subjects as any His Majesty had, but could not but complain of being so neglected. They had understood there was a force in the West Indies, and were surprized no assistance had been sent them." These were the circumstances stated in the letter which he had received, and which directly contradicted what had been advanced by the Secretary of State.

Mr. Sheridan said, the exertions of the governor, and the loyalty of the inhabitants, had produced the 300 unserviceable recruits mentioned in his letter. The plan of the enemy was not to attack it in the winter, but in the spring, before any additional force could be sent to it.

JANUARY 31.

NAVAL FORCE FOR 1794.

The resolution of the 29th was read a first time, and the question put for the second reading. Mr. Dundas lamented his absence when Mr. Sheridan attacked him, on the 29th, for what he had stated respecting convoys, and the ample protection afforded to the trade, &c. &c.

Mr. SHERIDAN remarked, though Mr. Dundas could not venture himself in the chill air of the house, he was happy to learn his indisposition had not prevented him from discharging his official duty in another place. He said, whether the right honorable secretary chose the land or sea for the scene of action, he appeared equally invincible and triumphant; that, stimulated by his courage and capacity, now he flourished the truncheon,—now he wielded the trident; and all mankind must fall prostrate before him, acknowledging his superior prowess.

In the plenitude of his generosity, not thinking the honorable admiral sufficiently able to protect himself in the ocean of politics, he took him under his convoy, and resolved to bring him safely into port. He then stated, that as to the letter which he had produced the former evening, he knew of no right the honorable gentleman had to pronounce it anonymous, merely because whatever confidence he had in the authenticity of its contents, it appeared to him improper to give the name of the author. He maintained that nothing had come out, in the course of the debate, which took in the smallest degree from the weight which he thought that letter entitled to. He contrasted the boasting and lofty manner in which two right honorable gentlemen defended the conduct of the Admiralty on the subject of convoys, with the plain, manly, and candid defence of the honorable admiral (Gordon.) He contended that, from the letters produced by the

right honorable gentleman, there were no fortifications, nor was that colony in any adequate state of defence previous to the 27th of August. He remarked, after commenting upon the letters dated 10th and 11th of October, that the last letter which the right honorable secretary agreed to have received, was dated the 9th of November. Now, he begged that gentleman would recollect, the letter he had produced was dated the 7th of December; and wished to know really, if ministers had received no letters since; if so, from what cause that proceeded? Notwithstanding the pompous account of nine thousand militia, he had no better opinion of the force in Nova Scotia than he formerly stated. The right honorable gentleman had stated that four thousand of them were collected in Halifax, merely on an emergency; and after all the compliments heaped upon them, said, that still they had their exercise to learn, being, as they were described, freeholders and merchants. He must allow, in one sense of the word, they were good men, particularly as giving security to return the arms. He contended that nothing had been advanced either that night, or formerly, which convinced his mind, or could convince the country, his former statement was not completely true; he would, therefore, re-state it, that during the whole campaign, there was not in Nova Scotia any naval strength, nor any force on land, adequate to the defence of that colony, in the event of its being attacked; and he averred that out of doors, in Lloyd's and at the Royal Exchange, if any enquiry was made where the best information could be obtained, it would be found the unanimous opinion, that the trade and commerce of this country, had not met with that protection which it ought to have done from the admiralty. One or two gentlemen, indeed, had spoken a different opinion in that house, respecting particular branches of trade; but none of them, could give what they said, as the general

sense of the London merchants. One honorable member had taken a curious way to prove the efficacy of the protection given to our trade by the admiralty, when he stated the sums that had been made by underwriting in the course of last year. Now the fair inference to be drawn from this, was exactly the reverse; and it became a censure upon the party that it was intended to panegyrisé, because nothing could be more true than that in proportion to the greatness of the risk, the advance of premium rose; and thus all the double premiums, which had been gained, were occasioned by the inadequacy of the protection by convoys which our trade had received. He was surprised to hear gentlemen compare our situation at the commencement of the American war, with our situation at the beginning of the present war. Then we had to contend with so many, and with such great powers; now we had all Europe as our allies against one power. Even our good ally Russia, upon this occasion, has bound herself by solemn treaties never to lay down her arms till Great Britain had made peace; though, by the way, from some unaccountable forgetfulness, she never has yet taken them up. As to what had been said of our captures at sea, he believed it would be found that France had taken as many ships from us, as we have taken from them.

Captain Berkley recommended gentlemen who spoke on the opposition side of the house to study nautical matters, before they attempted to speak on maritime affairs.

Mr. Sheridan apprehended that the honorable Captain, who had just spoken, had deviated from the propriety of debate, in presuming that no gentleman was qualified to speak on the question but those who sat at his side of the house. He appealed to several naval gentlemen near him, conversant in naval affairs, if there was not a shameful deficiency on the part of those entrusted with the protection of our trade. Though not in office, he apprehended

that they were not less qualified to give an opinion on the subject. Ministers, he observed, had come down this day, with voluminous documents, to overpower every argument that went to prove the neglect that exposed the trade to the capture of the enemy. If, continued Mr. Sheridan, there were any listeners to our debates, how humiliating to administration, to have it said, that those gentlemen who opposed the measures of government, called for an enquiry, on a subject to which its supporters declared, that the friends of government were alone competent to decide. If this was the case, they may have a complete triumph in exposing the weakness of those gentlemen, with whom he had the honor to agree.

The resolution was read a second and third time, and ordered to be reported on the following day.

FEBRUARY 21.

DEFENSIVE STATE OF HALIFAX.

Mr. SHERIDAN rose, he said, in consequence of his notice to bring under the consideration of the house the defensive state of Halifax. To those, who like him, condemned the principles of the war, there were, in his opinion, two duties of equal importance. First, to endeavor, by every exertion in their power, to prevent the war. Secondly, when that was impossible, to watch, with the same exertion, the application of the supplies which were granted to carry it on.

If they could not prevent the war, they were bound to look to the faithful application of the funds by which it was to be prosecuted ; and to take care that the object which it professed to follow was obtained.

Agreeably to this second point of duty, he now brought forward the subject of his present motion,—an enquiry into the defensive state of a very important colony, liable to be attacked by the enemy.

Relative to the enquires of this house, Mr. Pitt had lately advanced, he said, two doctrines of a very extraordinary nature. His first was, that during war there was great danger in enquiry. His second, that those who proposed the enquiry should make up their minds between the certain evil of enquiry and the probable benefit of the result.

As to the first, Mr. Sheridan said, it tended to destroy the inquisitorial functions of the house, and to abate all salutary vigilance and animadversion. It followed also, that the greater the danger of the country from the folly and incapacity of ministers, the stronger would their argument be, that when inspections and deliberation became most necessary, it would be most improper. He allowed, however, that it was a very convenient doctrine for ministers, who would thus find their own security and indemnification from the excess of their negligence and incapacity.

The second principle, though obviously aiming at candor, came under a peculiar degree of suspicion when it proceeded from those, whose particular interest it was to render all enquiry as difficult as possible: and that suspicion was much increased when it was recollected that he, who at present, in his ministerial capacity, asserted the principle when in opposition, was most prodigal in the use of the privilege he now meant to curtail. It was fresh in memory how jealous he was of this privilege when he first sat in the house; and what frequent use he made of it in his opposition to the American war. The conduct of the Admiralty at that time he severely scrutinized; particularly relating to the affairs of Dogger Bank, and the fleet off Ushant.

If no other good resulted from the enquiry than the maintenance of its general principle, this of itself, would amply compensate; it was a principle acknowledged in the general practice of the navy, that when a ship is taken the commander is always brought to a court-martial, though no suspicion is

entertained of his gallantry, or though his conduct may be known to be highly meritorious. It may be said **Halifax** is not lost; but though the case is not parallel in that particular, it is to be remembered that the naval enquiry only preserves in many instances the principle of enquiry.

In the present case, however, and in that lately brought forward by **Mr. Fox**, concerning the conduct of convoys, no possible inconvenience whatever could arise. The minister, he said, betrayed his own cause, and shewed clearly that it was not enquiry, but the result of it that he feared. With respect to convoys, **Mr. Pitt** said, "you will raise the expectation of merchants too high, regarding future protection if you prosecute the enquiry."—This clearly shews a consciousness that the convoys were insufficient. If they had been sufficient, surely nothing could be more desirable by ministers than to have that sufficiency proved. Enquiry then would have destroyed at once all injurious suspicions.

Though a proposition for enquiry should fail, he contended, it was not without its use. He was much mistaken if the proposed enquiry relating to convoys, would not produce much benefit to the country. We should not, he believed, hear, in future, of manufacturers being disappointed in the sale of their commodities for want of convoys; nor, if merchantmen should not arrive in time, would convoys sail now without them. Neither would there again be a property of half a million consigned to the protection of one frigate and two sloops, as in the case of the first **Jamaica** fleet.

The present enquiry was, however, on grounds different, and much stronger, than those on which **Mr. Fox's** motion was made; **Mr. Dundas** could not deny they were now at issue on facts; for though he had come down loaded with official papers to contradict what he (**Mr. Sheridan**) had formerly advanced; he still persisted in his original

assertion ; and, unless Mr. Dundas should produce those papers of which he read extracts, he would charge him with deceiving the house by false representation. Deception had actually taken place ; but probably not with any intention to deceive. The right honorable Secretary might well be supposed ignorant of the state of some part of His Majesty's extended dominions, when it was recollected that nearly a year ago he had complained of the heavy burden of his manifold offices, saying, that, from the moment he laid down at night till he rose in the morning, he felt that he had duties upon him, which he could not adequately fulfil. Notwithstanding that complaint, and the prospect then held out of speedy relief, no one had yet heard of any assistant being established, or any diminution of the duty taking place. Summer, autumn, winter, had passed, and spring was come ; and yet the right honorable Secretary still groaned under the same load.

If his former charges relating to Nova Scotia had been too strong, he would readily have retracted them ; but, on the contrary, he meant to add to them ; as from appearances, His Majesty's ministers had not simply overlooked Nova Scotia, but (being apprised of its importance, and not ignorant of its defenceless state at the breaking out of the war), had wilfully neglected it, and left it exposed to all attacks. To his former charges he also now added a charge of the same negligence at New Brunswick, that Halifax had experienced.

Mr. Dundas had been pleased to consider all his former charges as only founded on an anonymous letter. One evil of the prevailing doctrines of the day, he thought, was, changing the manly and generous character of Englishmen into that of eavesdroppers, and informers : another was, that all spirited and constitutional exertions were regarded as factious and seditious. To apply to the house of commons rather than the crown, or even its mi-

nisters, was now subject to that imputation. Mr. Grey's conduct in writing down to his constituents relative to an important subject, on which he was to give his opinion in that house, had been represented in the same way.

Formerly members wished to consult with their constituents, and were proud of maintaining this intercourse; now such a conduct was branded as seditious. Perhaps, he said, Mr. Grey's letter to Newcastle, and his own to Falmouth, would in Scotland have subjected them to sentences similar to those lately passed, which have disgraced the Star Chamber, and the worst reign of the worst Stuart. The letter he had written to Falmouth had been sent to ministers; and had from that channel crept into a morning paper, with a pretended discovery attached to it. He should, however, soon deprive the comments by which it was accompanied, of their gall. The letter he had quoted concerning Halifax, the house would recollect he had stated, came from a merchant there, and not from Falmouth; and whereas the letter to that town says, that the subject was mentioned on the first day of the session, it is notorious he never mentioned the subject of Halifax on that day; so that this letter of his (which he did not deny) referred obviously to some other subject. The letter he should never be ashamed to own, as it contained in three sentences four praiseworthy things. 1. A gentleman-like acknowledgement of a civil letter. 2. That he had so early availed himself of intelligence received, as in his capacity of a representative of the people, to mention it on the first day of the session. 3. That he had used such diligence of investigation as to confirm in his own mind every particular. 4. That he should be happy of any intelligence in future, which might be of service to the country.

He then read an extract, as follows, from the True Britain of yesterday.

"MR. ANONYMOUS DISCOVERED!!

"*Though Mr. SHERIDAN, in the course of debate in the house of commons, quoted a letter, the writer of which he was willing to expose, we can assure the public, that the letter had a name to it, as will appear by the following answer, which was sent to it by the worthy Senator :*

"SIR,

"*I am much obliged by your communication respecting Halifax. I mentioned the subject in the house the first day in the session, and I since find your intelligence confirmed in every particular. I shall be happy at all times to be favored with any intelligence which you think may be made use of for the advantage of the country.*

"I am, Sir,

"Your obedient Servant,

(Signed)

"R. B. SHERIDAN.

"Lower Grosvenor-street, January 29th.

Directed—"London, January twenty-ninth, 1794.

"MR. J. BLUETT,

"Free, R. B. SHERIDAN.

"Falmouth."

"*The above letter went of course as it was directed, and was taken out of the post-office at Falmouth, by the only person of the name of Bluett in that place, who happens to be a young midshipman of about fifteen years of age. The boy's astonishment at the contents are not easily to be described. He handed the letter about the town, where it occasioned no small mirth, as that to the honorable member, to which the above was an answer, was thus proved to be one of those Cornish hums which some wag at Falmouth has practised upon several former occasions with similar success.*"

As to a Cornish hum, he said he never heard it before, though he had often heard of a Cornish hug, and a Cornish borough. But to quit this subject, he held in his hands upwards of fifty letters from Halifax, all containing similar complaints to those of his anonymous letter, and expressing the greatest astonishment at the declarations made by Mr. Dundas, in the house, of the defensible state of that colony. Of these fifty letters, some he allowed were anonymous, but by far the greater part were signed. Of those signed, he was desired not to mention some names, as they should in consequence be looked on as marked and suspicious; and those who held places at all disposable by government would be sure to lose

them. By far the greater number, however, had allowed him to use their names, and were ready to come forward as evidences at the bar of the house, to prove every word they had asserted.

He should not dwell on the importance of the colonies of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. This point seemed to be universally acknowledged. True it was, that compared to their individual utility, the expense of defending them might be deemed too great; but when regarded as instrumental to the defence of Canada and Newfoundland, Halifax itself was better than the thirteen states of America. If too, by any event, a rupture should ever take place with America, which the highly censurable conduct of ministers to that nation had rendered too probable, the importance of Nova Scotia would be great indeed. It was found likewise to be a place highly serviceable for the recovery of soldiers when injured by residence in the West Indies—more so than any other climate in the world. We could not, in case of war with America, be masters of the West India sea, without having access in the winter months to the harbour of Halifax. Indeed, former ministers, by the peace establishment they kept up there, shewed clearly enough their opinion of its importance.

He then took a view of the various peace establishments since the peace of 1783, at which time we had there six regiments, one fifty gun ship, and five or six frigates. From this time, he said, the subsequent establishments were gradually diminished. In 1785, the naval department consisted only of one fifty gun ship, and four or five frigates; and in 1789, of two frigates and three sloops alone. It was clear, he said; if such a force were unnecessary at each of those periods, it was highly extravagant to have them kept up; and, if it were necessary, then the great diminution of force at the crisis of war was highly culpable.

If we watch and follow the plans of ministry,

who seem to suppose themselves immaculate, we shall find, by all the arguments they have used, that they saw the war was inevitable so early as August, 1792; and yet they were taken by surprise in February, 1793.

The only force at the commencement of the war at Halifax, was one single frigate, the *Hussar* of 28 guns, Captain George, two companies of the fourth regiment, about 90 men, and one company of artillery. He called on the right honorable Secretary to stand up, and declare if such a force was adequate to the protection of such a colony, when we had to contend with an enemy so active and powerful as France.

Mr. Dundas had said, in answer to the charge he formerly brought forward, of the scandalous neglect of ministers, he had taken ample care of this colony, and had provided sufficient force for its protection, for that in Nova Scotia there were 9000 men, and in Halifax alone 4000. This statement he explicitly denied, and undertook to prove its fallacy at the bar of the house. If, as Mr. Dundas said, the colony were loyal, which he perfectly well knew, it was more criminal to leave it destitute and exposed to the enemy, and ready to yield to any force that might be sent against it.

General Wentworth's corps, which Mr. Dundas had so strenuously insisted, was numerous, well chosen, and well appointed, was composed of not more than 350 men, and those most wretchedly selected, and not recognized by General Ogilvie. As to the opinion of Governor Wentworth, so much boasted of, he said it could not be forgotten that he was not a military man, but merely a civilian invested with a military rank and office for the sake of the emolument attached to them. It was not to be wondered at, that a governor should be inclined to think well of his own provision for defence. The new raised corps, however, was defective both in numbers and equipment: 350 men, and those not strong and athletic

young men, or disciplined like our militia, but taken. (as the requisition men in France are) from sixteen to sixty years of age.

If Mr. Dundas takes shelter under the declamation of Governor Wentworth, he should then, he declared, make him the object of a serious charge.

He expressed much surprise that Mr. Dundas had only read, on a former occasion, extracts of the Governor's letters; and had not submitted the whole of them to the house. He wished also for more information on the subject from General Ogilvie, who was commander-in-chief of the colony.

He was glad to see an honorable Admiral (Gardner) in his place, as he had some questions to put to him of great importance; which, from his ready explanation on a former occasion, he was persuaded he would answer without reserve. He could not assent to that secrecy and professional mystery which was sometimes affected. The house was and ought to be adequate to the comprehension of all subjects connected with the welfare of the kingdom. They were constitutionally, and in fact, competent to decide on the conduct of lawyers, admirals, and judges. He should decline animadverting on the attack of Martinique at present; though he had no doubt much blame was due to ministers, for their conduct respecting that island.

Admiral Gardner sailed, he said, to the West Indies in February; and after the ill-planned expedition against Martinique, returned again to England with a convoy on the 24th of July. By the confession of ministers, the expedition against Martinique had completely failed from defective information; and there was no other object in the West Indies on which our fleet could be beneficially employed. Admiral Gardner, he was bound to suppose, knew of no force on the American coast, nor that the French Admiral Sercy had sailed there; in fact, this information had reached him at Barbadoes.

He wished, therefore, to ask him, if he had been ordered positively to return home, or whether he had directions to follow Sercy to America?

Admiral Gardner had said, that little force was requisite to convoy our trade to the West Indies. Was it not obvious that Admiral Sercy might think exactly like Admiral Gardner? And if so, that he might send a small force home with the French trade, and remain himself behind with the greatest force, to plan and execute other expeditions? This supposition was probable; supposing, as Admiral Gardner had said, he had reason to imagine the French trade would have returned to Europe.—That Lord Howe being in the channel was an objection to this supposition he denied, as two additional sail of the line would have been no security to the French trade against Lord Howe's fleet; they would have only enriched the prize; he wished, therefore, to ask if Admiral Gardner had the discretion to watch and follow Admiral Sercy? And if so, why he had come home with all his force, excepting two sail of the line, which he sent to Jamaica as a convoy, when he asserted that a great convoy was useless? There was no particular call for the honorable admiral's service at home, nor that of his fleet. He had not since been employed in any very active service; nor would he have been of less use to his country, in watching and following the enemy on the coast of America. Nothing that he saw prevented the admiral going to Halifax to winter, or at least he might have sent part of his squadron there. This, he thought, he should have done, unless he had received positive information that the French admiral had sailed for Europe. That Admiral Gardner was expected at Halifax he knew from various sources of information. Captain Norris, who succeeded Captain Courtney in the command of the Boston, when he fell in the very gallant action with the Ambuscade, had written to Halifax under the presumption that Admiral Gard-

ner was there : and he was so sanguinely expected, that cattle was bought up for victualling the squadron under his command. That Halifax, being defenceless, was in danger, he maintained, and would prove at the bar of the house. He had evidence that vessels were actually fitted out at New York, for an expedition against Halifax, under Admiral Sercy ; and that nothing but a most fortunate accident (the mutiny on board the French fleet) had prevented it. The Hussar had been followed nearly from the coast of America to Halifax, and the force there was well known to the French. At that time Halifax was so destitute and defenceless, that the cannon in many ports was not mounted, and the fortifications were in a state of ruin. There were on shore only 90 men of the 4th regiment, one company of artillery, and 350 ill-disciplined and wretched militia. He called, therefore, strongly on Mr. Dundas, either from better recollection to admit the truth of this description, or to maintain his former assertion of the respectable state of defence in which the colony was at that time. He was sure two frigates might have taken Halifax, and have destroyed all the stores and naval magazines. He thought that leaving the American coast defenceless, was highly impolitic, not only with respect to our trade, but also with regard to the appearance we ought to have kept up with America, towards whom we should at that time have conducted ourselves in such a manner as to raise their opinion of our activity and force, particularly by sea. All his letters, he declared, expressed great astonishment at the declarations made by Mr. Dundas, of the state of security of Halifax. It was well known that the troops had been withdrawn to enforce the expedition against Martinique, both from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. This at the time was unknown to the agents of the regiments, and even to the Secretary at War. From New Brunswick to Halifax, the place of rendezvous, they were sent without convoy,

and exposed to the ships of war and privateers of the enemy. It never was so essential to look high and powerful in the eyes of America, as when we were insulting her by arbitrary orders of council, and when it was but too evident we had estranged her good will; at such a time the honour of the British flag should have been doubly guarded.

If too, as Mr. Dundas had said, it was doubtful how far the British flag in an armed ship would have been welcome in an American port, the suspicion became so much the stronger that the Americans would assist the French; and in that view, it was the more incumbent on us to protect our flag from insult, instead of having it exposed as we had done to the mercy of our enemies. If neither a desire to protect our trade or colonies, or to maintain the credit of our flag, could instigate ministers to send a force there; they should, in point of policy, have taken advantage of the favourable opportunity which the improper conduct of Genet, the French minister, gave us, of conciliating the Americans. From the commencement of the war to October, when the mutiny broke out on board the French fleet, the whole coast of America was left destitute; the panic was not confined to Halifax, it extended even to Canada; and Lord Dorchester had taken sudden precautions against an attack. New Brunswick had been put in the best state of defence of which it was capable. It had been left too at the moment of peril, destitute of force sufficient to resist a single frigate. Such was our want of naval force, that the Earl of Mansfield, a large and valuable ship, laden with naval stores, came to Halifax from Nova Scotia without a convoy; and for want of one it was now detained at an expense of 460*l.* a month. So great was the alarm, that at Halifax the inhabitants, the governor, &c., began to remove their furniture, through fear of the enemy. These being his sentiments, which he undertook to prove at the bar, it was incumbent on the house to

investigate the business ; for either he, or those he charged, should be brought to shame. He should propose the production of all papers relative to the subject, as proper evidence, which he would complete by oral testimony at the bar. He wished the right honorable secretary to come fairly forward, and not to come down with the weight of official authority, and read a few extracts. In the present case there were no circumstances that rendered a disclosure of facts improper. All he had advanced, he demanded only permission to prove at the bar of the house. It was not for him to say why a governor put a good face on his own exertions, and spoke of the security of that which had never been attacked ; neither was he to speak of the motives which might induce a colonel to speak handsomely of his own corps, from which he received emolument, at the same time that he promoted the patronage of government. He wished to have the authority of General Ogilvie, whom he thought most competent to decide on military subjects. He himself should produce in proof of what he asserted, the evidence of officers who had served at Halifax, of eminent engineers who were perfectly acquainted with the colony, and likewise of members of the council at Halifax. So confident was he of the facts which he had stated, and the competence of his proof, that if any merchant of repute who had correspondence at Halifax, would say that the general tenor of his letters from thence were not of the same complexion that he had described, he declared he was ready to take on himself that shame and criminality he was convinced he should fix on others. He meant not only to charge ministers with a highly criminal neglect, but also to couple with that charge another against Mr. Dundas, or Governor Wentworth, of having grossly deceived the house of commons on a very important subject, at a very critical time. Nothing could more shew the fallacy of Mr. Pitt's principles against enquiry, than their standing

in opposition to such strong and concurrent testimonies of dangerous neglect. So important did this principle of enquiry now appear, that rather than submit to any diminution of it, he should give it as his opinion that those who brought forward those enquiries, should themselves be exposed to animadversion if they failed in making them good. He particularly condemned all attempts in ministers to dictate their opinions to that house. Neither the time nor manner of its proceeding was subject, he contended, to their authority. He concluded by moving the following papers:—

1. Extracts of accounts from Governor Wentworth.

2. All official accounts relative to Halifax.

3. All official accounts from General Ogilvie.

4. Returns of effective force.

5. Correspondence between ministers and General Ogilvie.

6. Extracts of journals of papers transmitted in 1793, through the Postmaster-General to Ministers.

After a long debate,

Mr. Sheridan rose in reply.—He said, what he wished most particularly to know had been carefully concealed, namely, whether, after the Winchelsea reached Admiral Gardner, that officer had acted according to his own discretion, or whether he was tied up from assisting Halifax by the orders of government. The pressing necessity of his presence at home, had indeed been stated as the cause of his neglect of Halifax; but it did not appear that the necessity was at all pressing, since he came home at great leisure; nor could the service in the Mediterranean be alleged in vindication of his return and abandonment of Halifax; since the English fleet sailed for the Mediterranean in May, and Admiral Gardner did not arrive in Europe till October. If the admiral obeyed his orders, he must approve his conduct as far as it personally related to him; but if he had a discretionary power, he must strongly con-

demn it. It had been said, who can attack Halifax in the winter? and from this it would be inferred, that the admiral, in leaving it to its fate, had left it in no danger. But he must inform the house, that during the last forty-five years, there had not been more than three severe frosts, and it might be fairly calculated that the harbour was not frozen more than once in ten years. It was, therefore, a mistake to suppose that the severity of the winter would baffle the efforts of the French. It had been asserted that the whole house was pretty much agreed as to the information respecting Halifax; but he thought there was some difference in it, for he had heard nothing that night respecting the nine thousand strong athletic young fellows, about whom the right honorable secretary had on a former occasion made so much boast. However, he supposed we would have it all in the papers; but, notwithstanding the opinion of others, he conceived there was a very wide difference in their information; and, therefore, he thought the most proper way of coming at the truth would be by going into a solemn inquiry. The circumstance of Governor Wentworth's receiving no emoluments on account of his new corps, had been asserted with triumph, and he certainly was not able flatly to contradict it; but although he might not receive a direct income, yet the patronage of the regiment, by which he might provide for relations and dependents, was not to be treated lightly. With equal exultation had it been stated, that 800 of the inhabitants of Halifax had thrown themselves in the way, and shewn a preference of being employed as military, rather than of being exempted. But here the right honorable secretary disclosed a fact highly alarming to this country, and dangerous to the fidelity of our colonies; he had disclosed, that in the hour of danger, our colonies must depend upon themselves for protection; and if once they were confirmed in that belief, and were also trained to the use of arms, their affection for this

country must diminish, and even their allegiance become equivocal. He wished the right honorable secretary had assigned any other reason for abandoning Halifax ; that he had even said it was by the neglect or mistake of government, or by casual necessity, which should be averted in future ; for any reason he would more readily have admitted, than one which seemed so mischievous in principle to the safety of all our colonial possessions. He denied that the regular troops in Halifax had in July exceeded 350 ; and repeated his assertions respecting their feebleness. And as to the calling out of the militia, the government could claim no merit on that account, since it was done by the assembly ; and so far from resembling our militia, it was simply the *posse comitatus*, a number of raw undisciplined men, who could not well be kept together, or who, if forced to remain always on the defensive, might discover they were under no obligation to this country, and might therefore think of separating from us. The good fortune of Commodore George, in escaping the French, had been related as meritorious to the commanders in Halifax ; but although they were fortunate, he could not say they were wise. When that officer sailed for the West-Indies, there were two French line of battle ships, and several frigates, in the Chesapeake or at New York ; and it was indeed singularly fortunate, that he was not captured by them, for if he had proper information, he had a right to conclude, that there was much more probability of his falling into the enemies' hands than of escaping. To refute the assertions of the vigilance of government in taking measures of defence at Halifax, he stated, that though that colony had been deprived of her strength early in the summer, yet no effective measures had been taken till September : even on the 5th of August, no attempt had been made, not a militia-man called out, nor a gun mounted on the batteries ; nor is it probable any measures of precaution would have been even

taken when they were, had it not been for the alarm created by the arrival of the French in the Chesapeake; and he declared that he would produce officers of equal credit and importance with Major Hodgson, to substantiate these facts. He would not accuse the right honorable secretary, or even Governor Wentworth, of a concerted design to impose upon the public by the information which had been produced in that house; but he was firmly persuaded, that if no imposition was intended, a great mistake must have arisen somewhere. The dispatches of Governor Wentworth, which had been produced as authentic statements of the situation of Halifax, he had been told, and circumstances led him to believe he had been told truly, were written with a design that they might fall into the hands of the French; for at that time almost every vessel sent to sea had been captured, and certainly it would have been indiscreet to have run any hazard of making the enemy acquainted with the really wretched state of the place; for so truly was this the fact, and so great was the alarm, that what had been described as excessive loyalty, was nothing else than an anxiety for their own safety; an anxiety which induced the better sort of people to take spades in their hands, and to work on the fortifications like common laborers, in order to inspire and animate the populace. They said we are willing to erect works and defend the place if you will but give us a director. But all this vigor in the inhabitants was merely produced by the criminal neglect of government, which had lowered the military establishment, at a time of such imminent danger. He asked if it was possible to produce a single merchant in the trade of Halifax, to say he approved of the manner in which Halifax had been defended. He concluded with calling on ministers again to come forward, to satisfy the public upon this subject; and said he was sure that nothing could be sa-

atisfactory to the public, but a fair and candid inquiry.

The first motion was then put and carried ; and the second negatived.

Admiral Gardner informed the house, he had information of the two French seventy-fours and frigates ; but he understood they were to return to France, and he had hopes of falling in with them in his passage home, and he did not hear of their failing for America until after he had sailed towards home.

Mr. Sheridan was satisfied with the observation of the honorable admiral, as far as it went to the point of intelligence of the destination of the French fleet ; but condemned the whole conduct of the English fleet, upon that expedition. If the honorable admiral had no discretion, but had positive orders for what he did, no blame could be attached to him. If he was allowed to judge for himself, he had acted indiscreetly ; he had no right to catechise the honorable admiral, but he was bound as a member of that house, to make these observations.

The other motions were then put and carried.

Mr. Sheridan then moved, “ that there be laid before the house, a copy of the memorial delivered this day to the Secretary of State, by merchants interested in the trade of Halifax, residing in London.”

Mr. Dundas said, that such a memorial was delivered this day to him about three o'clock in the afternoon, and it was only a paper delivered for the purpose of asking, on the part of the merchants concerned in it, what kind of protection they were to have in future : he thought it dangerous to disclose to the public the plan on which they, or any other part of His Majesty's dominions, were to be defended in time of war. He did not pretend to say he had perused the whole of it attentively, but he thought it would be highly improper to give its contents, under all the circumstances, to the public.

Mr. Sheridan contended, that the very circumstance of the merchants asking how they were to be defended in future, was pretty strong evidence that they were dissatisfied with the manner in which they had hitherto been defended, and that ministers were either unwilling or unable to lay down any plan for

defending them ; else why should a memorial be presented, asking how they are to be defended in future ? He stated this, to shew that ministers, in the opinion of these merchants, had been either regardless of their defence, or too ignorant to know in what manner they ought to have been defended. A memorial was a public paper, which, unless a reason was assigned for withholding it, ought to be laid before parliament.

The motion, by permission, was afterwards withdrawn.

FEBRUARY 24.

PETITION FROM THE REV. FYSCHE PALMER.

By sentences of the Court of Justiciary at Edinburgh, and of the Circuit Court at Perth, in August and September 1793, Mr. Muir and Mr. Palmer, for the crime of leasing making, were adjudged to transportation; and Botany Bay was understood at the time the sentences were passed, to be the place to which they would be transported. These were the first instances in which transportation was imposed by the Court of Justiciary in Scotland for an offence of that nature. In the last session of parliament, within a few days after, the house of lords had finally decided, that no appeal was competent from the Court of Justiciary in matters of law.*

MR. SHERIDAN said, he held in his hand a petition from the Rev. Fysche Palmer, humbly representing that the petitioner was now suffering under what he conceived to be an illegal judgment of the Court of Justiciary in Scotland, from which there was no appeal to any other court of justice, and praying such relief as to the wisdom of the house should seem meet. The date of the petition was some weeks prior to the time of presenting it, which he conceived, on due consideration of the circumstances that had arisen to occasion the delay, could be no objection to its being received. It had been put into his hands yesterday, and he now moved for leave to bring it up.

* A term in the Scottish law, importing the speaking of words tending to excite discord between the king and his people.

Mr. Pitt said, the house could not suffer a petition to be brought up, the purport of which was, to pray the interposition of the house, between a sentence pronounced by a competent court, and the execution of that sentence. The regular mode of proceeding was, by a petition to the crown for mercy. The house could interfere only where legislative matter was stated, as the ground of the application.

Mr. Sheridan said, the petition was perfectly within the rules of the house: it contained no application for mercy; it complained of a sentence against law, and surely it would not be contended, that the house of commons was not the proper place to resort to for redress against such a sentence.

Mr. Pitt afterwards, in reply to Mr. Fox, observed, that on a point so important, on which no previous notice had been given, in order to obviate even the hazard of a rash decision, he should move to adjourn the debate till the 27th.

Mr. Sheridan said, after the good effects produced in the present instance by reconsideration, in consequence of what had been said by his right honorable friend (Mr. Fox) he could have no objection to the adjournment. But let the house consider if the motion of which notice had been given for that day should be postponed, as he thought it ought to be, what would be the state of it on a future day. If his honorable friend (Mr. Adam) were to go merely into the record, in order to do that, it was only necessary that he should have the record before him. But the record had been refused. His honorable friend would therefore be under the necessity of going into the whole case at large. He therefore wished that the house would also reconsider their refusal of the record, without which, when the motion came before them, they would be arguing in the dark.

The motion for resuming the debate on the 27th was put and carried.

Mr. Whitbread afterwards moved, "That an humble address be presented to His Majesty, requesting that His Majesty will be graciously pleased to give directions for preventing the said Reverend Thomas Fysche Palmer being sent in the transport on which he is now on board, till after Thursday next." It passed in the negative.

A debate followed.

Mr. Sheridan remarked, that those who had opposed the motion had confounded two things perfectly distinct—the motion which was to have been brought on by his learned friend (Mr. Adam) and the state of the question as it at present stood. Those who espoused the same side of the question with himself had been accused by an honorable gentleman, (and the idea, though not expressly asserted, seemed, in some degree, to be countenanced by the right honorable gentleman who had spoken last) with having attempted to inveigle ministers into a declaration of their sentiments. It was really somewhat amusing that they should be accused with having endeavoured to surprise the candour, and impose upon the ingenuousness of ministers. They, good simple souls, it seemed, were only to be attacked in this manner; and the only advantage which opposition had to expect, was to be derived from this mode of attack. But if he was allowed to advert to the statement of facts, he conceived that nothing could be more fair and direct than the conduct of those who had espoused the cause of those unfortunate men, who had unfortunately incurred the vengeance of the law, and nothing more suspicious than the conduct of their opponents. He, with a noble lord, and another honorable gentleman, had waited upon a right honorable gentleman (Mr. Dundas) at a very early stage of this business. They, at his request, presented him with a statement of the ground upon which they meant to oppose the decisions in these trials which had lately taken place in Scotland. He must confess that the honorable gentleman had in this interview conducted himself with the utmost candor and politeness. Upon being presented with a report of the objections to the trials, as a sufficient proof that he allowed them some weight, he had immediately transmitted them to Scotland. But afterwards, upon receiving an answer from the judges, he had assumed a very different conduct, and had neither thought proper to

present them, nor the parties concerned, with a copy of that answer. One honorable gentleman has stated, that, after various attempts in this business, we have in every instance failed in our object. The same honorable gentleman has, however, rather unluckily, accused us with delay. That we have indeed failed, in all our former attempts, to bring this business to a fair discussion, is the reason why we found it still necessary to persevere. A good deal of delay has, however, arisen from the other side. When my learned friend (Mr. Adam) moved for some papers relative to the late trials in Scotland, the right honorable gentlemen took four days to consider of the question, before he thought proper to give a negative to the motion. There were other causes of delay besides those which arose from this dilatory conduct on the part of ministry. There were some circumstances of such peculiar delicacy, that he should merely glance at them, but which had operated in preventing this petition from being brought forward sooner to the house. It was conceived that from the influence of certain connexions, it would neither be proper or humane to advise the petitioners to have recourse to the present mode of seeking relief by petition, while there remained the smallest chance of obtaining favour from royal mercy. It was conceived too, that as the prerogative to pardon was particularly vested in the crown, a petition of this sort, addressed to the house of commons, might wear an appearance of what of all things we were chiefly desirous to avoid—a wish to trench upon this prerogative. Besides, an idea was studiously held out, that the royal mercy might be extended, if opposition to the sentence was not too strongly pressed in a certain obnoxious quarter. From the influence of these motives, this petition was deterred from being sooner brought forward. The sentence, said Mr. Sheridan, I affirm in every respect to have been most hostile to the principles of this constitution, and in its nature most un-

just, illegal, and oppressive—it is such a sentence, that if it had taken place in England, I should not have been surprised that the country had risen up in arms to oppose it; and as little should I have been surprised, if the attempt to introduce the law on which this sentence is founded, into this country, should have cost the head of that minister who should have dared so grossly to insult the principles of the British constitution. There is not, I will assert, one Englishman, who has heard the proceedings on these trials, whose feelings do not revolt at the recital: and if such are the feelings of Englishmen, what conduct ought these feelings to dictate to us in the present instance! If such is the spirit of the English law, and Scotland forms a part of the British Empire, why ought she to be excluded from that protection, which all the subjects of that empire have a right to expect from this house? When my honorable friend mentioned that he had not seen those gentlemen (Messrs. Muir and Palmer) who are unfortunately connected with the present discussion, I am sure that he meant them no personal disrespect. I have seen them—seen them associated with convicts of the most worthless and despicable description; seen them, not indeed loaded with irons, but these irons freshly taken off. I have seen them separated from one another; surely an unnecessary addition to their sufferings; thus wantonly depriving them of that last of all consolation, the society of affliction. In reverting to the particular circumstance which was the ground of the motion, I beg leave to put the case, that instead of a sentence of transportation, it had been a sentence of death; suppose that the petition states, that the petitioner was not the person who ought to have been tried; and then imagine that the execution was to take place on Wednesday, the day previous to that appointed for the consideration of the petition; if in such a case the unhappy petitioner should fall an innocent victim to the weak or wicked

policy of a minister, that minister ought himself to suffer the death which he had thus wrongfully inflicted. There is one circumstance in the present case which cannot be too often recalled, or too forcibly urged, namely, that the court of whose sentence we complain, is a court from which there is no appeal. In the present instance the sentence is tantamount to death itself, a banishment for seven or fourteen years from all the enjoyments of polished society, from all the consolations of friendship, and the reciprocation of domestic endearment. If the facts shall be proved to be such as I have endeavoured to shew, there will be such a case made out as should induce you to give immediate relief to the individual, and to provide a speedy remedy for the law. If such be the fact, the feelings of those gentlemen who would resist the affording such relief are not very desirable, nor are their consciences much to be envied. I shall only add, that if the sentence, which it is the object of this motion to suspend, shall take place before Thursday, ministers will stand in a situation of responsibility, which it certainly will not be pleasant for them to incur, and which, perhaps, at a future period, they may wish they had avoided.

The house divided.—For the motion 34 ; against it 104.

FEBRUARY 25.

PENNY-POST BILL.

Mr. C. Long proposed a resolution to the committee, to consider of the conveyance of letters by the penny post. He stated, that as the law now stood, letters sent by this conveyance from any part of the city of London or Westminster, the borough of Southwark or the suburbs, to any other part thereof, were liable to pay one penny ; but if sent from the city of London, &c. to any place out of that city and suburbs, another penny was payable. In like manner he proposed an additional penny should be payable upon letters put into the penny post office out of the city of London, &c. and conveyed to any place within the cities of London, Westminster, or suburbs. He

said, that the object in laying the additional penny in the manner he proposed, was to defray the additional expense which would be incurred, by increasing the number of deliverers of letters by the penny post, which he said were in future to be delivered six times a day instead of two ; and that the regulation was to take effect as soon as possible.

Mr. SHERIDAN observed, that this was a comical sort of Irish tax, or penny-post, where a man was to pay two-pence for it. He objected to this as a new tax, under the title of regulation of an old one ; and that although the case was trivial in itself, yet the principle on which it proceeded was wrong ; for that the regular conduct of finance should be, first, a supply was to be agreed upon to a certain amount, and then, after time being allowed to consider the case attentively, the ways and means for raising that supply were to be proposed ; and again, some time was to be given to the house to consider on the mode of raising that supply ; and the whole being determined, there could not after that, regularly, be an additional tax for that year. The present proposition was not a new tax in point of form or name, but was so in point of fact ; for it proposed an additional tax on the carriage of certain letters under the title of the penny-post. This he contended, ought to have been brought forward in the ways and means of the year ; for at that time the public ought to have known all the burthens they were to bear for the ensuing year.

The Speaker observed, that the bill, in point of form, was quite regular.

Mr. Sheridan did not question the propriety of the regulation, but only wished that the principle should be established, that when the minister had once stated his ways and means for the year, he should not be repeatedly coming to parliament to propose fresh taxes under the name of regulations.

The bill passed, and the report ordered to be received on the next day.

FEBRUARY 26.

ATTORNIES TAX BILL.

Mr. SHERIDAN concurred in opinion with his honorable friend (Mr. Adam) that the tax was ill-founded in its principle, and would be ineffectual in its operation. He also thought that it was a tax of passion: it was too much the custom of the present day to catch at the prevailing prejudices of the people, and humor them; thus we had entered into a war of passion; the very approbation of the house, when the tax was proposed, clearly demonstrated it to be the result of prejudice against the profession, in which, though a few individuals might have acted dishonorably, abounded with men of the most fair and most respectable characters. And the expression used by the right honorable gentleman, in answer to this applause, shewed the source whence this tax originated, viz. "he wished that he could have made it the only article in his budget." He observed that the right honorable gentleman had said, taxes were laid on other respectable trades, which were not considered a stigma; true, there were taxes for licenses on Alehouse keepers, dealers in spirits, and others of the like kind, but those were so regulated by the excise. There were also taxes paid by persons who held places under government, which he was certain the right honorable gentleman, (Mr. Pitt) thought no stigma.

Mr. Pitt denied, that he had used the words as Mr. Sheridan had quoted them; they were used in warmth, and when the house was by no means orderly, and merely on the spur of the occasion; but as well as he could recollect, his words were, he "wished every article in his budget was as highly approved."

Mr. Jekyll said, that this tax was a very great hardship, as the court could strike from the roll any person, or cancel his indentures, from even an opinion that he was not qualified to act as an attorney.

Mr. Sheridan said that what had fallen from his honorable and learned friend (Mr. Jekyll) weighed much in his mind. The present Chief Justice, the

honor and integrity of whose conduct merits every applause, had taken much pains to render this profession respectable, by removing from it such persons as he could lay his hand on, for their irregularity and misconduct. He must now find his hands very much tied up, as to the removal of attornies, after paying this tax, or they will be liable to injustice, if after paying such a sum, they may be removed at the pleasure of the court, without being refunded. He also observed, that instead of answering the effect of leaving young men some property to keep them from acting improperly, it would take from them a large part of what little they possess.

PENNY-POST BILL.

The resolutions of the committee, for regulating the mode of conveying letters by the penny-post being read,

Mr. Sheridan renewed the objections which he stated yesterday on that subject. He allowed, in point of strictness, this was not absolutely irregular, but in point of spirit, it certainly was so; for in reality a new tax of one penny each letter, &c. was imposed on the public that was not brought forward in the ways and means of the year. Having enforced this by many observations, he said he was anxious that some reason should appear on the journals, why the house should consent to so extraordinary a step, and therefore he moved, that after the words expressing the sum to be raised, should follow these words, "towards defraying the expense for more frequent and speedy delivery of letters by the penny-post."

Mr. Pitt agreed with Mr. Sheridan on the propriety of this amendment, and maintained all his former arguments on the regularity and propriety of the measure itself.

After a short conversation between the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Mr. Sheridan, the resolutions were read, agreed to, and a bill was ordered to be brought in in pursuance of them.

FEBRUARY 27.

PETITION FROM THE REV. FYSCHÉ PALMER.

Mr. SHERIDAN said, he understood that the Chancellor of the Exchequer had made good use of his time since the debate on this subject was adjourned, and that he was now disposed to consent to the receiving this petition. Indeed the question was so plain that it ought never to have been argued; the petition ought to have been brought up at once and read, and there should never have been a doubt expressed upon the subject; nor would it be necessary for him to argue the case—it was too clear to require any discussion. He had several precedents exactly in point upon this matter, but it would be unnecessary for him to detail them. He mentioned, however, the case of Thomas Pilkington as being exactly in point with that of the present petition. He then called for the reading of a standing order, with respect to the right of the house to inquire into the conduct of courts of justice—(which was accordingly read.) This order, he said, would be only a mockery, if the house not only did not receive the petition, but agree to have the record to be moved for by his learned friend (Mr. Adam) brought up, and laid on the table also.

The petition was brought up and read.

MARCH 10.

MR. ADAM'S MOTION RESPECTING THE TRIALS
OF THE REVEREND FYSCHÉ PALMER AND
MR. MUIR.

On this day Mr. Adam moved for a review of the trials of Mr. Muir and the Rev. F. Palmer. From the records demanded, his object, he said, was to question the legality of the sentence passed upon them. But as no appeal could lie from the decision of the court, however questionable, he proposed, in consequence of the

doubtfulness of the case, to move for the production of certain records relating to the trial, and for a petition to the crown in their favour. The Lord Advocate of Scotland, Mr. Wyndham, and Mr. Pitt, contended strongly for the propriety of the sentence, and of the proceedings of the Scotch courts. Mr. Fox and Mr. Sheridan supported the motion.

Mr. SHERIDAN confessed, that he never felt it to be so utterly impossible to be silent as after arguments which he had just heard from the Lord Advocate of Scotland.

The learned lord, not confining his observations to the individual case before the house, had adverted to matters of the greatest moment, to matters which implicated this question. Whether the law of England ought not to be assimilated to that of Scotland? In the commencement of his speech, he seemed to doubt the competency of any person to argue the subject, unless his attention had been not only directed to professional studies, but unless he had spent his whole life in them; that his learned friend's life had not been so spent was a circumstance of joy to him, because he had not by such means narrowed his mind.

In the progress of his observations, the learned lord has divided his countrymen into two classes, the associators and the levellers, and republicans: he will not admit that there is any middle class, and of consequence none qualified to act as an honest and impartial jury. This is indeed a melancholy representation, and it is to be hoped that the country furnishes some exceptions to this general division of character. There were some who belonged neither to the one class nor to the other; and who, though they would not condescend to crouch at the foot of power, would still defend the constitution with unabated activity and courage. Having given such a character of his countrymen in Scotland, the Lord Advocate had confessed his ignorance of the law of England; but had expressed a wish that the house would believe him to be learned in the law of Scotland. If his statements of that law were correct,

he had indeed presented a picture calculated to alarm and to frighten every man in that house, and in the country. Would the learned lord, he would ask; or any other person, dare to attempt the introduction of a bill for transporting persons convicted of libels in England to Botany Bay? No, he would not.

In all the arguments which the Lord Advocate had used, Mr. Sheridan observed, that learned Lord had gone farther than the necessity of the case required. In his statement of the evidence of Russell, he had mentioned, that that witness was committed because he refused to answer. But had he brought this refusal within the point of law? Somebody, it appeared, had talked to the witness about his evidence: but did the Lord Advocate mean to say that talking to witnesses after their citation rendered their evidence inadmissible? He certainly could not mean to palm such nonsense on the house as Scotch law: it was not, he would assert, the law of Scotland.

An attempt had been made to put the question on the footing of wishing to throw a stigma on the Scotch judges. What, he would ask, was the cause of the confidence of the people in the judges of this country? Was it their character? No. It was the controlling power which the house had over those judges, and which was the best security for the proper administration of justice by them.

In entering into a history of his own feelings and conduct previous to the trial, the learned lord had stated, that at the commencement of these transactions he had begun to study the common law and that eighteen months ago he had been obliged to read laws which had slept for near a century.

A more accurate character of the late trial could not be wished than this: this is so curious a circumstance, that if persons were present who had never heard of the recent proceedings in Scotland, they would say, What new crimes have these men com-

mitted, that it is necessary to go back one hundred years, in order to find a punishment for them? They would think that Scotland had exhibited a revival of the golden age for the last century, that no treasons and no insurrections had taken place within that period, when, in fact, there had been not only sedition and insurrections, but two rebellions. Had the learned lord, during all that period, not heard even of one solitary instance? Had he not heard of the case of a Mr. Dundas, of Arniston, who had received from the Duchess of Gordon some medals with the Pretender's head on them, which he had dispersed, and who had likewise gone so far as to harangue the faculty of Advocates in favour of the Pretender?

As the Lord Advocate had gone into the evidence on the trials, it became fair for him to go into the accusation against Messrs. Muir and Palmer, and what, he asked, was this accusation? Mr. Palmer had been accused of inciting poor people to insist on a parliamentary reform. If the Lord Advocate had not been as ignorant of English history as of English law, he would have found some resemblance to Mr. Palmer's conduct; he would have found a resolution signed Pitt and Richmond,* from which resolution every word and sentiment used by Mr. Palmer had been stolen. I have here, said Mr. Sheridan, drawn up in three columns, the declarations of Mr. Palmer, Mr. Pitt and the Duke of Richmond, and Mr. Burke. I will not detain the house to read them, but I can declare that there is not one sentiment, one expression used by Mr. Palmer, which he has not borrowed from the others; with this only difference, that they have gone much greater lengths and employed more forcible language, in calling the people to assert their right of universal suffrage, and to throw aside all dependence upon parliament. The learned gentleman boasts that, in conducting Mr. Muir's trial, the established course of proceeding was followed. He

forgot however to state, that in summing up the evidence, while every circumstance of aggravation was brought forward, no notice was taken of any part of the evidence in favour of the accused.

The distinction between banishment and transportation, Mr. Sheridan, according to his ideas of the subject, explained in a very different manner from what had been advanced by the Lord Advocate; and notwithstanding his particular reference to the statute 1686, Mr. Sheridan insisted, that the two words were not of a synonymous meaning. The learned lord had argued very curiously with regard to leasing-making. He defined it to be merely telling lies or speaking a few idle words; and yet he has told us that the act of 1703, which rendered this offence formerly capital, liable only to an arbitrary punishment, could intend nothing less than transportation, as simple banishment would have been much too light a punishment. In order to support the legality of the proceedings of the court, he has stated a number of cases, in which, though the statutes only gave them authority to impose a sentence of banishment, they had taken the liberty to inflict transportation: but the learned lord, in the unbounded triumph of his speech, comes at last to what he thinks "a clinching argument" against those who appear friendly to the motion. He at once endeavors to silence us by the memorable case of Baillie, in the year 1704, several months after the law which has this evening been so often mentioned was passed. This instance his lordship, in the hey-day of his declamation, considers as the climax of his legal authority, which was to panic-strike and confound all his opponents. It was, however, very unfortunate for the Lord Advocate of Scotland, that of all cases which could be resorted to for the maintenance of an argument, this was, without exception, the worst and most odious. And why compare the abominable proceedings of the Privy Council to those of the Court of Justiciary?

Ought a sentence of that court, in point of infamy, not inferior to the Star Chamber, to be deemed a judicial precedent, and to furnish an authority for the Court of Justiciary on the present occasion? Indeed in this opinion he had the high authority of a great lawyer in the other house, who had said from the woolsack last year, when the precedent of the Appeal to the Privy Council, 1704, was stated, "You must not mention that; you cannot argue from it; it is no precedent." They had shewn their contempt for the law passed only eight months before: they not only sentenced Baillie to transportation, but ordered him the pillory as a preliminary; and inflicted on him the epithet infamous, as a testimony of their christian charity and benevolence. For such an undue exercise of power, these men ought to be execrated rather than held up to admiration; for in this instance there was a total departure from the letter of the law. The learned lord indeed, even in bringing forward a precedent, does not attempt to justify the sentence; he admits it to be severe, and brings it forward only to contrast it with the mercy of the present judges.

The question, however, ought to be more strictly attended to. It was not a discussion concerning the merits or demerits of the Scotch Privy Council in the year 1704, but whether, in the cases of Muir and Palmer, there now appeared sufficient grounds to order an examination into the conduct of the Court of Justiciary, and whether or not the whole proceedings ought to be revised, and, if necessary, amended? He hoped that gentlemen would deeply impress on their minds the serious consequences of these legal decisions, before they gave the vote which they were that night called upon to give. He lamented the modern Scotch explanation of the word sedition; believed that Muir and Palmer had been dealt with in an unconstitutional manner; and thought that a check or control ought to be given to the arbitrary conduct of the Scotch Judges.

Much idle declamation had been made respecting the common law of the two countries. He was convinced that the common law of England was founded on the broad principles of common sense. He wished that the spirit of the criminal law were the same in both countries; and that the Scotch judges should divest themselves of extravagant partiality, and evince some respect to the common law of England, and to the common sense of every country. The learned gentleman has told us, that the trials of Messrs. Muir and Palmer were conducted by the common law of sedition. I cannot believe that there can be any such law; but, if such be the law, it ought not to be allowed to exist. Can it be consistent with any principles of equity and common sense, that the fate of individuals should hinge upon a law which the learned gentleman himself has admitted has not been in exercise for an hundred years, and of which he has not been able to produce even one precedent. Every word which he has quoted from Sir George Mackenzie furnishes an argument directly against his own assertions. Will he affirm that the case of Mr. Muir or Mr. Palmer comes under any of the three descriptions of sedition stated by that learned writer; or can he, with all his ingenuity, devise a fourth species of sedition, in which it can possibly be included? No; the species of crime which he has described is a monster as unknown to the law, as the proceedings are repugnant to every principle of justice. What is the crime charged, and the situation in which the accused has been placed? It is to put a person upon his trial on the suspicion of being a disaffected subject. It is to assume a right to prove against him general disaffection, without affording him an opportunity to repel any specific charge that may be brought against him. The learned gentleman stated, that he conceived himself entitled to bring forward the circumstance of circulating Flower's

book as a collateral proof of Mr. Muir's seditious intentions. What ! bring forward a book of which not a single word is mentioned in the indictment, the legality of which was never called in question, which was not before the court, and of which not even one sentence was read to the jury ! This is to put a man upon his trial without affording him either the means of defence or the hopes of acquittal ; to drag him to the bar to answer upon a general charge of disaffection raked up from every circumstance of his private life, and every expression of his unguarded moments. In such circumstances what individual can be secure ; or what can be more illegal or oppressive than a trial conducted on such principles ? Good God ! Sir, is it possible that this can be the law of Scotland ? If it be, it ought not to continue one hour longer ; and although the Lord Advocate insinuated as if he thought the same system ought to be introduced into England ; yet he was not afraid that Englishmen would ever suffer such a violation of the spirit of our salutary laws. If ever a minister dared to recommend it, he would find a manly resistance to the measure. Mr. Sheridan concluded, that there was one circumstance, which, though not entering into the subject matter of debate, he could not avoid stating to the house. An honorable and worthy member had, upon a former night, stated, with motives that, no doubt, did honour to his feelings, an insinuation respecting the sanity of the faculties of Mr. Palmer. This unfortunate gentleman, now on board the vessel which is to convey him to Botany Bay, had, in a letter which he held in his hand, declared that not all the severities of his unmerited fate had touched him so sensibly as this imputation ; and he earnestly desired that it might be understood, that in the petition which he had offered to that house and to the foot of the throne, he had demanded justice, not implored mercy. The mistake had probably arisen from the circumstance of their being a brother of

this gentleman, a clergyman, who labored under the misfortune, mistakenly, and no doubt kindly, attributed to him.

The house divided ; for the motion 32 ; against it 171.

MARCH 14.

FOREIGN TROOPS.

Mr. Grey called the attention of the house to the subject of which he had given notice,—the question of the prerogative of the crown to land foreign troops in this country, without the consent of parliament. He concluded with saying, that, in order that the proceeding of this night might go down to posterity to be judged of by them, he should desire that extracts of the bill of rights, the mutiny bill, and acts of parliament, might be read: which being done, he moved, “ That leave be given to bring in a bill for indemnifying all persons who shall have advised His Majesty to order the landing of any foreign troops that may now be in this country,” &c.

Mr. SHERIDAN observed, that a learned gentleman (Mr. Anstruther) at the opposite side of the house, did not condescend to answer a single argument offered by the learned serjeant, (Adair) but was content with answering facts, supposed to have been stated. The learned gentleman had discovered there was something beautiful in truth, and took great delight in overthrowing those falsehoods of which he was himself the author. This was a novel and ingenious mode of arguing, and he could not explain the learned gentleman's motive for having recourse to it, except it was to shew his skill and expertness in reply. Mr. Sheridan contended that as it was a breach of the law to advise the King to dissolve the parliament, much greater illegality must attach to the conduct of those who advised him to land foreign troops in this kingdom, without the approbation of the commons, inasmuch as the one was a trifling circumstance, compared to the magnitude and danger of the other. It had been stated, that the address of both houses of par-

liament was a sufficient indemnity, and was strictly legal and constitutional. But if a bill of indemnity was deemed necessary with respect to the violation of the corn laws, how much more necessary was such a bill, as far as it regarded the landing a foreign army in the country? There was one distinction, he affirmed, which rendered a precedent absolutely desirable on the present question. The executive power was created for the benefit of the people governed; and that precedent could not be a bad one which was for the benefit of the people; and he should be concerned to hear it laid down as an axiom, that in proportion to the abuse of the executive power, were the representatives of the people incapacitated from exerting their rights, in order to prevent an unconstitutional stretch of the prerogative of the crown. He was a friend to just prerogative, but the parliament had rights to maintain tantamount to every other consideration; and if once they were tamely to suffer the assumed exercise of any one prerogative of the crown, that moment they sealed the death warrant of the constitution. If it was argued that His Majesty had the power of landing foreign troops in this kingdom, without the previous consent of parliament, and that argument was admitted, that moment the liberties of the country were overthrown. It had been said, there was no declaration against the King introducing foreigners into the kingdom, and of course the measure was not illegal. But here he would insist, the dignity of parliament was called upon to resist any insinuation; for when Solon had been told, that in his code of laws, there was no punishment against a son who had murdered his father, he replied, it was because he could not conceive the possibility of perpetrating a crime so monstrous. The argument he adduced from this observation was, that the contemplation of a measure of such magnitude as that of landing foreign troops at the pleasure of the sovereign; a

measure which might at once annihilate the liberties of the people, was such as did not come within the contemplation of our law-givers, as a thing far above the puny restrictions of a statute, a thing too monstrous to be thought necessary to be recognized by any act of parliament. His honorable friend, he remarked, who had made the motion, had said, that the introduction of foreign troops, was against an express law of the country; but this was considering in too narrow a point of view, the act of settlement, and he would, therefore, take it on the broad basis of being too monstrous to be admitted in a free country. He was not surprised to hear those gentlemen who had recommended themselves to the minister by their apostacy, support the measure; but he was astonished, that the old friends of that right honorable gentleman did not revolt at the idea, who were sensible from experience, how fatal the introduction of strangers to support a minister might be to themselves, by monopolizing all their places. [Here Mr. Sheridan is supposed to have alluded to Mr. Anstruther and some other gentlemen.] He next adverted to Lord Stafford, a man eminent for his abilities, and for his protection of the rights of the people against the encroachments of the crown, and equally notorious with others for his shameless apostacy. When he commanded an army against Scotland, he was told, the law made it illegal; but what was his reply? That he would hang any lawyer who dared tell him so. When he recollected that memorable speech, he was aware of the arguments to which gentlemen on the other side of the house would have recourse, were he to mention the situation in which he considered the Hessians, who were the subject of the night's debate. If he was a magistrate, destitute of those tender attachments, which gentlemen of that description generally manifest to those in power, he should not hesitate to disperse those foreigners, as an illegal and tumultuous rabble. He denied their

being a legal army. The mutiny act, he insisted, did not attach to them, and they were not of course, recognized by the civil power. It has been said by an honorable member (Mr. T. Grenville) that he conceived, in case of invasion, His Majesty might bring foreign troops from Ostend, for the protection of this country, in case of danger; and that His Majesty's ministers ought to be impeached, if they did not advise him to that measure. He was of opinion that the observation should have due weight with the house, as a descent on the country may not be improbable, if gentlemen candidly considered in what manner our navy was employed. At present a large portion of the navy was assisting at the reduction of Corsica, while our trade was neglected, and captures made daily in the Mediterranean, and even in our own channel. The honorable member had asked, if parliament would, in such a case, impeach the King's ministers for advising him to introduce foreigners into this kingdom? To this he would answer, though he had no objection to vote for a bill of indemnity, for a meritorious violation of the law, still, he would not be the last to move for their impeachment for leaving the country in a situation so defenceless. If, he said, such a procedure was to take place, he would not answer for the spirit of the country; for if the people were to see the kingdom over-run by a band of foreign mercenaries, there existed still that energy among Englishmen that they would, however they may despise the French, follow their example, and rise as an armed nation, rather than submit to the consequences which must inevitably follow, by an army of foreigners being suffered, on any pretence, to land in the country. If it were the wish of the King to land such force, he maintained that any construction which could be put on the bill of rights was a paltry consideration, compared to the consequences which must result from such a measure. He did not wish to speak of any particular sove-

reign, when he asserted, that Kings in general thirsted for power, and their ministers were seldom known to resist propositions which had for their object extension of the authority of those princes from whom they derived their influence. The militia act enjoins, he observed, that if the domestic force of the country was necessary to be called out, that the circumstance should, as soon as convenient, be submitted to the house. But, if in an interval of parliament, fifty thousand foreign troops were to land in the kingdom, who would assert that the responsibility of the minister was a sufficient apology for the measure? For my part, observed Mr. Sheridan, I should not be very forward in moving an act of impeachment against a gentleman at the head of fifty thousand men. It was ridiculous to say, that a previous notice of the measure was a sufficient security, as while the members were speaking *pro* and *con* on the business, the lobby of the house might be filled with foreign mercenaries. Mr. Sheridan next adverted to the stress laid on the precedent of 1784. At that time it had been mentioned, that ministers had introduced foreign mercenaries without the consent of parliament, and that then no bill of indemnity was required; but this he argued was unnecessary, as the house had voted that His Majesty's ministers had forfeited the confidence of the public. In certain cases he did not conceive it wise, or good policy, to tie up the hands of the executive power. But there were certain principles in a free constitution, from which the house should never depart. If it was true, that by the voting of the army estimates, and the navy, the exposure of our finances, and other circumstances, might be attended with some inconvenience; yet, when the inestimable advantages which spring from keeping the spirit of the constitution inviolate, were put into the opposite scale, there was no member in the house who would not say, that the constitution of the country should be held sacred, and a trifling

did not obscure the valuable privileges which resulted from it, when its other forms were impartially contemplated. Mr. Sheridan concluded by giving his hearty approbation to the motion of his honorable friend.

The house divided—for the motion 41; against it 170.

MARCH 21.

VOLUNTARY AIDS FOR RAISING TROOPS WITHOUT THE CONSENT OF PARLIAMENT.

Mr. SHERIDAN asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if the measure which had been lately published relative to the recommending the raising of troops by subscription, to be opened by the lords-lieutenants of different counties, came from the Secretary of State? and if so, whether the right honorable gentleman had any objection to laying that communication before the house? He should suppose there could be no objection to this. Indeed, it was a point that required no argument, as he conceived. Nothing could be more clear, than that a proposition from the executive power, to any quarter whatever, for the raising of troops, ought and must be laid before parliament; nor any thing more decidedly unconstitutional, than that there should be any measure whatever carried on for the raising an army, without the immediate knowledge of the house of commons. All that he wanted now to know was, whether this communication was to be laid before the house as a matter of course; if not, he must move for it.

Mr. Pitt said, the communication alluded to, was not a plan for raising troops; if it had, that communication should have been laid before parliament; but the whole was nothing more than a measure by which ministers might be enabled to digest a plan, which, when digested, should be laid before the house, and which he should do on the first practical opportunity. Estimates were actually prepared, and would be ready, he believed, to be presented to the house on

Monday next. With regard to the paper of communication to the lord-lieutenants, he could not agree that it should be produced, and what he had said already would shew there was no necessity for producing it; for that paper only went to the question in what shape the estimates should be laid before parliament. It was only a communication to form a plan, which plan of itself had no authority, before it received the sanction of parliament. He had not an idea that a single man should be raised, or a single shilling levied, without the express consent of parliament. But after parliament had sanctioned the measure, he hoped there would be no impropriety in any individual voluntarily contributing what he pleased towards supporting the militia. It was notorious this had been done in almost every former war in which Great Britain had been engaged.

Mr. Sheridan said, he had not heard any thing like a reason why this communication should not be laid before the house; there was no time to be lost on so important a subject as this. That there should even have been a proposition from the crown to levy money on the people, in any manner, under any pretence whatever, without the express consent of the house of commons, excited his astonishment; and, therefore, he should have a motion to make on this subject on Monday next.

BILL FOR IMPOSING AN ADDITIONAL DUTY ON PAPER.

On reading the report of the committee on this bill, Mr. Brandling observed, that he had instructions from his constituents to state, that the duty now proposed on the lower class of paper would amount, in point of fact, to three times the sum proposed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer; and that it would be extremely oppressive. He did not know whether this was true or not; but he thought it would be but fair that his constituents should have an opportunity of proving what they alleged, if they could; and for that reason he moved that this bill be re-committed.

Mr. Sheridan said, that from what he had heard, he thought this bill ought to be re-committed. He considered that, in its present form, it would never answer any good purpose to the revenue. Indeed, bills of this kind were almost always passed through the house without receiving an adequate attention; and he hoped to see the day when that negligence should not be suffered, and when every revenue bill

without exception should be printed, for there were none which required more attention. It appeared extraordinary, indeed, that fine paper, used by the higher ranks of life for their amusing and elegant correspondence, should be charged about fourteen per cent. additional duty by this bill; and that the most useful and cheap communication of intelligence should be charged between forty and fifty per cent! This, if persisted in, would amount to a prohibition of almost all the cheap circulation of intelligence. On newspapers, for instance, the duty would have the effect which he had stated; but he hoped they would be allowed a drawback on the stamp equal to the amount of the additional duty. There was another circumstance which he could not help mentioning, because it would be necessary for him to introduce a clause to prevent such scandalous abuse of the revenue laws. There was a mill for the manufactory of paper to a great amount in this country, in which the forgery of French assignats was carried on. The excise officer who attends this mill, doubted whether he could suffer this sort of proceeding to pass; and on making the necessary communications, he received what appeared to him to be sufficient authority for superintending this, as if it had been the regular and honest manufacture of paper in the way of trade. He did not state this upon a loose hearsay—he could give the name of the mill, if necessary. He thought it highly important for government to disavow by its ministers any share in such a scandalous proceeding.

Mr. Pitt said, that information from those who committed forgery, was not the best to be relied on.

Mr. Sheridan said, that the answer of the Chancellor of the Exchequer was in fact nothing. He stated this to have been done at a public paper mill in this country; and that the excise officer, who superintended the manufacture of the mill, had what appeared to him to be good authority for passing it by;

and it was essential to the honor of government that all this should be cleared up ; which should be his object another day.

The motion for the re-commitment was negatived, and the resolutions of the committee agreed to.

MARCH 24.

ALIEN BILL.

Mr. Thompson moved, " That there be laid before the house a list of all foreigners who have been ordered to quit this country under the power of the alien bill."

Mr. SHERIDAN desired the question might be read ; which being done, he observed, that the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Dundas) who opposed the motion (whether he attended to it or not, he would not pretend to say) did not seem properly to understand the meaning of it ; because he agreed to the propriety of concealing the circumstances of each particular case, and of giving ministers credit for their motives in acting under this bill. Such observations would come better when the motion should be followed up by something that might call for that sort of vindication ; the case was not so at present. He then proceeded to shew that this confidence, as affirmed by the Secretary of State, might be abused by inferior officers ; as he had reason indeed, to think was the case ; and had waited on the right honorable gentleman, from whom he had the greatest attention and civility, as well as redress to the objects for whom he interfered, and for which he begged the Secretary of State to accept his personal thanks. This, however, proved that abuse had taken place, and may be repeated ; to prevent which, the list moved for might have some effect. He could not agree with the right honorable gentleman, that it was improper to publish the name of those whom we thought too suspicious in charac

ter to remain with us; this was paying a bad compliment to all our allies (which, by the way, was nearly all Europe) in the war against France; but this proved that we had not made the cause so common a cause, as was once imagined, and he was glad of it. The abuse of power under this bill, he must again repeat, ought to be an object of investigation, that it might be avoided in future. Some persons had been ordered away as suspicious, who had, on farther enquiry, been found subjects good enough to be naturalized by act of parliament. He did not wish this question to be pressed to a division, but he hoped the discussion would be followed by one good effect,—that ministers would be more cautious than they have been, as to the orders they give for persons to quit the kingdom.

The motion was then put, and negatived.

VOLUNTARY AIDS FOR RAISING TROOPS WITHOUT THE CONSENT OF PARLIAMENT.

Mr. Sheridan, in pursuance of the motion he gave on Friday, proceeded to call the attention of the house to the subject of raising troops in this country by subscription. It would not be necessary for him to enter into any arguments, at present, on the general question; since he had learnt, after coming into the house to-day, the right honorable the Chancellor of the Exchequer had made good use of the interval that had elapsed between the motion to be made to-day, and the notice of making it. He had benefitted by the lesson of prudence given to him on another occasion, (the petition of Mr. Palmer); and now he understood the paper was to be granted, and therefore nothing more need be said on that subject now, and more particularly as this matter must be discussed hereafter. But it appeared to him proper to say a few words on points which arose out of this question, and very materially connected with it. Generally speaking, any interference of this sort

was called by ministers, and their advocates, an improper interference with the affairs of government. He wished to see the kingdom (as he hoped and trusted every man in it did) put into a state of defence equal to the danger; and now the more so, if the rumour was true, that we had lost the aid of one of the great powers in the alliance; for it was now confidently stated, that the great monarch alluded to had actually withdrawn himself altogether from the common cause against France;—the more so still, from the abominable negligence of ministers with regard to the safety of our coast; for, at this very moment, there was a party of the enemy who had landed on our coast, and had committed devastations in Northumberland. He was persuaded that, notwithstanding all the obloquy cast on the gentlemen on that side of the house by certain interested persons, they would be found to unite in the most earnest desire of preserving the interest of the country as well, perhaps better, than those who boasted so much of their patriotism; and who, in truth, seemed to recede from duty, in proportion to their boasting of the manner in which they performed it. This seemed to be the case in the instance he alluded to; for when the enemy was plundering in part of Northumberland, the mayor of Newcastle was sent to for assistance; the answer was, that the force he had was not adequate to the purpose for which it was wanted. Having said this to prove that ministers were not remarkably careful of our coast, he must say a word or two on the manner they had endeavoured to proceed in open violation of the constitution. He did not mean to debate the subject at length now, because another day was to be taken up with that discussion; but he would say, “that an application from ministers to any body of men for the raising a voluntary contribution towards supporting any military power in this country, is wholly and perfectly illegal and unconstitutional.” He should say nothing about prece-

dent either; for he believed there was not any that came up to the point now before parliament.— There was at this moment a body of men deliberating on the best mode of raising men, and of paying them when raised, independent of the parliament of this country; and this too not merely in consequence of a voluntary act of theirs, but from the express requisition of the Secretary of State; and this was followed up by an advertisement in the public papers, worded in a manner that seemed to indicate that those who do not join it, have views that are hostile to the constitution of the country. Of that character, and to that effect, was the advertisement in Surrey, desiring a meeting at Kingston on the 27th of this month. [Here he read the advertisement.] He might, and he ventured to say should be told, that it was not the intention of ministers to put these troops under pay, until the plan of raising them, and the mode of paying them, shall receive the sanction of parliament. But why was parliament passed by in this business in any stage of it? Why did ministers resort to lord-lieutenants and grand juries, instead of the house of commons, the only place to which they could legally and constitutionally resort? If, for instance, he was to go to this Kingston meeting, and ask these gentlemen what they were about, they would answer him, “Oh, you are a mere member of the house of commons, you know nothing of this business as yet; when we have settled the whole of the plan, it shall be laid before you by the Secretary of State; he will explain what we have determined upon; that is the readiest way of proceeding.” And then the ministers would have nothing more than to bring in a bill of indemnity for raising troops and paying them without the interference of the house of commons. He should say no more now on this subject; he should only move, “That an humble address be presented to His Majesty, praying, that he will be graciously pleased to give directions that there be

laid before this house a copy of the letter dated Whitehall, the 14th of March, to the lords-lieutenants of several counties, together with all plans and other proceedings proposed thereon."

Towards the close of the debate,

Mr. Sheridan, in reply, said, that nothing which had fallen from gentlemen on the other side of the house, or from his learned friend (Mr. Adair), could induce him to relinquish the discussion upon this subject; that it was by no means to be considered an abstract question, which had been viciously brought forward to agitate the existence of a right, before such right had been violated; but it was to restrain the farther violation of a right, already infringed upon. There was a public meeting called for this purpose, by the sheriff for the county of Surrey. He thought the house should take some part in the business. He did not intend to propose that a deputation of members should be sent to assist in their deliberations, but the Serjeant at Arms should attend, and bring my Lord Onslow and Mr. Bowles to the bar of the house, to answer for their conduct. With regard to the notice given by the minister, he was of opinion, that he had not given any which could be noticed in a parliamentary manner. The worthy magistrate (Sir James Saunderson) confessed the measure should have originated in that house; yet, in the same breath, he said, he should have considered an account of some subscriptions at a country meeting, a due notice. He adverted to the neglect of the coast; the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Dundas) had said the French must always have a force in the North seas, and we must be liable to such accidents; the same may be said of the south coast;—he did not think the port of Shields the proper place for stationing a force, but along the coast from Shields to Leith. He conceived the learned Serjeant had not displayed his usual discrimination upon the present occasion. He could

not answer whether such a clause as he proposed would be brought forward; and if it should, it would only operate as a bill of indemnity, and gentlemen had already shewn a strong dislike to the apprehended disgrace of such a bill. But as he understood there was a message to be delivered from His Majesty to-morrow, and which he supposed would be followed up with an address (though of late every message did not require an answer, the communication being considered sufficient); he would propose an amendment to that address, upon which the legality of the conduct of ministers in the present case might be fully discussed.

The motion was put and carried nem. con.

MARCH 26.

MESSAGE FROM THE KING.—INVASION.

A message from His Majesty was delivered this day to the house, purporting the intention of the enemy to invade the kingdom, and requiring the necessary succours to oppose him, by encreasing the militia; and informing it, at the same time, that, relying on its concurrence, the King had issued orders to that purpose. A corresponding address was moved by Mr. Dundas, to assure the King of the readiness of the house to concur in all the measures requisite for the prosecution of the war, as just and necessary.

Mr. SHERIDAN adverted to the particular situation in which he was placed by this address; and, after what had fallen from his right honorable friend (Mr. Fox), he wished to be perfectly understood. There were two points before the house that were distinct and separate. There was nothing in the message from the King, or in the address now moved in answer to it, that had any reference whatever to the papers now upon the table, with regard to the communication of the Secretary of State to the lord-lieutenants of the counties; and, therefore, he should agree to it. He should abstain too from making the motion of which he had given

notice upon that subject, if he found that ministers had thought better on the subject of subscriptions; and had taken this public, fair, and constitutional mode of calling for the aid of the country to the executive power. But if he found that they had not abandoned that plan, and that this measure was not to be understood as a proof that they had retracted their opinions, he should be under the necessity of making the motion of which he had given notice.

In reply to some observations from Mr. Pitt,

Mr. Sheridan expressed his astonishment that what he had said before could have been so palpably misrepresented. He had said that he would not oppose the address, although he disapproved of calling the war just and necessary. He had also said, that if ministers would declare that they had given up their plan of soliciting subscriptions, he would give up the motion which he intended to make on the subject. Surely there was no connection between making or not making that motion, and voting for the address. After what he had heard, he should think it his duty to make the motion, when the papers were printed; and as far as argument and authority could be relied upon, he should prove that the measure was a misdemeanor on the part of ministers, and on the part of all who assisted them in it.

The address was voted without a division.

BILL FOR THE ENCOURAGEMENT AND DISCIPLINING OF SUCH CORPS AND COMPANIES, AS SHOULD VOLUNTARILY ENROL THEMSELVES FOR THE DEFENCE OF TOWNS ON THE SEA COASTS, OR FOR THE GENERAL DEFENCE OF THE COUNTRY AT LARGE, DURING THE PRESENT WAR.

Mr. Pitt moved for leave to bring in this bill.

Mr. Sheridan observed, that the right honorable gentleman had formerly stated, that these corps were then meant to be under martial law; and he had also observed that the present bill was intended to be similar to that of 1782. According to that bill, the volunteer companies were not to be subject to martial law, but in case of actual invasion; and were authorised to make rules and regulations among themselves for the direction of their conduct. He therefore wished to know, whether the present volunteer corps were meant to be put under martial law, except in case of invasion? He said, it was extremely material that that point should be clearly and distinctly understood.

Mr. Pitt said, it was intended that the corps should be subject to martial law whenever they should be called out; and that they might be called out on something short of an invasion.

Leave was then given to bring in this bill, and Mr. Pitt and Mr. Secretary Dundas were ordered to prepare and bring in the same.

MARCH 28.

BILL FOR AUGMENTING THE FORCE OF THE KINGDOM, &c.

Upon the motion for this bill being committed, Mr. Fox observed, that there appeared to him a circumstance in it worthy the attention of the house. He alluded to the words in the bill, which were, "on the appearance of an invasion." He thought that this was giving to the executive government a dangerous and almost an unlimited power.

Mr. SHERIDAN apprehended that, as the bill now stood, with the words "appearance of invasion," all the troops under this bill would be liable to be called out almost under any pretence. He thought that this might deter many persons from enrolling themselves, and, therefore, might defeat the real good purposes of the bill. He wished the bill had been a mere transcript of the bill in 1782, which the Chancellor of the Exchequer proposed to take for his model. What was meant by the appearance of invasion? There was at present the appearance of invasion, from the King's message; the probability of an invasion was a very different thing, and on which, he confessed, he had no alarming apprehensions. But he was afraid that this vague expression, "the appearance of invasion," would stand in the way of the voluntary service which the Chancellor of the Exchequer professed, by this bill, to endeavor to encourage; because it went to the subjecting men to military discipline unnecessarily, and on uncertain grounds. He feared, that by this bill, all the fencibles or volunteer corps might be subjected to military discipline for the whole remainder of the war, if any lord-lieutenant or sheriff of a county should happen to call them out once to suppress any internal tumult or disturbance; this, he conceived, might operate to prevent many from enlisting, who might be enrolled, if they were assured that they would not be under such military discipline, until any invasion, or actual rebellion, took place.

To this Mr. Pitt observed, that these persons would not be under military law or discipline, until they actually marched under arms;—to this they did not subject themselves at the time of being enrolled,—but was to be stated to them before they actually marched, and then being subject to military law, was only to be the consequence of a specific agreement entered into by themselves. This was provided in the bill; and he hoped the honorable gentleman, when he came to employ his ingenuity on this subject again, would not do it to excite any alarm in the public mind, and produce an effect which might tend to prevent any persons from enrolling in this corps, for assist-

ance, for our internal defence. He hoped, in future, that gentlemen would employ his ingenuity rather to remove than to infuse doubts.

Mr. Sheridan said, that his object was to deal fairly with the people of this country, by telling them the real situation they were to be placed in. Ingenuity, he had no doubt, they would naturally enough expect from the Chancellor of the Exchequer; and he would supply them copiously with that article, but what they would chiefly require was a little plain dealing.

The bill was ordered to be committed for Monday next.

VOLUNTARY AIDS FOR PUBLIC PURPOSES WITHOUT THE CONSENT OF PARLIAMENT.

Mr. Sheridan said, that in bringing forward the subject of the demand which had been made by His Majesty's ministers, of a benevolence from the people, he should be obliged to trouble them at considerable length; and he hoped that he should be indulged with their attention. The proposition which he intended to make, was so congenial with the spirit of the constitution, so necessary to its maintenance, in the purity in which it had been handed down to us by our ancestors, so essential to the security of the people, and to the very existence of parliament, that, in his opinion, it wanted only to be heard, in order to be generally received.—The demand made by government, and addressed to different lords-lieutenants, was of the greatest importance in every light in which it could be viewed; and its importance was encreased by the circumstances by which it was accompanied; for the right honorable gentleman had chosen to persist in the measure, which he had adopted, in such a way, as to make it evident, that he rather acted for the sake of establishing the principle, than from any motive of immediate advantage to the state. He would have been happy to have put off the discussion, if, even after the first mention of it in that house, the right honorable gentleman had thought proper to

come forward in any fair and constitutional mode, to apply for a parliamentary sanction of this most alarming measure. But it seemed, through the whole of his recent conduct, to be his first desire, in the ostentation of his power, to encrease the prerogative of the crown ; and in the choice of means, to give the preference uniformly to that which contradicted some established usage, violated some fundamental principle, or demolished some constitutional fence. This was the case in the landing of foreign troops in this country. If he had chosen to apply to parliament for their sanction, no one will say that a doubt would have arisen, or the smallest hesitation have taken place, about granting an immediate sanction to their entry into the kingdom. But he disdained all such application. Anxious to establish the precedent that the crown could, at its pleasure, introduce any number of foreign troops into this country, he contemned all indemnity, and put it upon the footing of prerogative. And thus, in the same manner, with a parliament sitting ; a parliament certainly who had shown themselves not indisposed to comply with any measure proposed by the right honorable gentleman,—instead of coming down to state and desire the farther aids which might be necessary for the defence of the country, an application was made, through the Secretary of State, to the lords-lieutenants of counties, to instigate a subscription, and levy a sum of money among the people, not subject to the control of parliament, nor even within its cognizance. When this extraordinary proceeding was noticed in parliament it was thought proper at length to bring down a message from the crown. He even then hoped that in that message words would have been introduced, and a proceeding taken upon it, which would have made his present motion unnecessary. He hoped that the right honorable gentleman would have felt it to be his duty, to call upon parliament to authorize the proceeding ; and even this, though a tardy and ungracious mode

of conduct, he should have been happy to have seen; and he should not, in such case, have thought it necessary to submit to the house the motion which he held in his hand. But, in this message, not the slightest application was made for any authority or sanction of the proceeding. All that he had done was, to bring in a bill to put under certain regulations, the men to be levied by the money so to be subscribed. The question for the house to consider this day was, whether the people had a right to offer and to give, and whether the crown had a right to receive, a supply or subscription for public purposes, without the knowledge and consent of parliament?—this question involved in it no less than, whether the crown could maintain a force, and carry on the executive government of the country independent of the parliament thereof? He averred, and should endeavour to prove, 1st, that it was against the reason of things, and against the first principles of a mixed government, and of a representative system; and, consequently, not reconcilable either with the spirit or the letter of our constitution, for the crown to possess such power. 2dly, that it was not consistent with the ancient and sound usages of the country, conformable to the best authorities, or to be reconciled with the custom of the kingdom in good times; and 3dly, that even if it was consistent with the usages, and might be countenanced by authorities, that it was not a wise course, nor fit to be resorted to as a source of revenue for the security of this kingdom. These doctrines were clear to his mind; but if he should be able to make any one of them obvious and manifest to the house, it was enough for the purpose of his motion. As to the first, namely, that it was against the reason of things that such power should exist in the crown,—he would say, that there could be no true security for public liberty, excepting on this ground, that the crown can neither take nor use property to any public purpose without the previous

consent of parliament. It was not the boasted liberty of Englishmen merely that property was secured to them, but that no property, however it might come into the hands of the crown, could be applied to any possible purpose, except such as had been previously authorized by parliament. It was not then simply the boast of our freedom, and the basis of our security, that the crown could not take money out of our pockets; but that the people cannot, by any act of indiscreet benevolence, present their money to the crown, excepting through the channel of parliament. For, suppose that it was otherwise, and the grand juries, corporate bodies, county meetings, and other assemblies, could, at their pleasure, present sums of money to the crown, to be used at pleasure,—parliament must become from that moment unnecessary; the King would have the means of employing this money to purposes not previously explained; for it was the peculiar office and duty of parliament to square and adapt the grant of money to the special purpose, and to see that no sums were put into the disposal of the executive government, which were not to be appropriated to a purpose which they had previously judged necessary. If grand juries and county meetings could not then, with safety to the constitution, grant such sums of their own accord, how much more alarming must it be if a supply of this kind was to be demanded of them by the crown, and to be granted upon such demand? What must be the situation of the country, if the crown could at pleasure appeal, not to parliament, but to knots and selected societies of individuals, and procure supplies for purposes unknown and unexplained to the legal representatives of the people? It was possible that a moment of delusion might arise when, by exerting all the influence of the crown, and adding to it all the quackery of cant words, and of inflammatory appeals to their passions, the people might

be brought into a temper to grant supplies, even when the parliament had refused them.

He might mention an instance within all their recollection : In the year 1784, many persons were of opinion that the house of commons should have refused the supplies, as the best means of resisting the unconstitutional attack that was then made on the privileges of the house. He, for one, was against the measure ; but it certainly would not be denied, that if at that time it had been adopted, the people of the kingdom were, by the artful delusion and cry of a fourth estate, and of a monstrous coalition, brought into a temper to have granted a supply to the crown, and that in such a way as to have made all the functions and purposes of parliament unnecessary to the crown. The East-India Company would no doubt have been ready to come forward with their 500,000*l.* or 1,000,000*l.* and a sum at least equal to that annual grant, which the wisdom of their ancestors had thought fit to reserve in the hands of parliament, as the best security for all their other privileges, would have been raised against that very coalition, a great part of which was now revered as the most splendid support of the very vitals of the constitution. They would have subscribed against all that was great and glorious—against the person who was now at the head of the law—and against those who had thought that nothing could preserve the liberties of this kingdom inviolate, but involving the nation in the present most blessed and advantageous war. If the counties of England were to be left to assess themselves, and that they distributed the order for the sum which each district should raise—a means by which still the crown would obtain money by the consent of the people, and by which at least the constitution would not be apparently injured, the measure would still be contrary to all sound policy, and to the spirit of our system ; for it would abolish parliaments ; it would render the king independent of that watchful

body, whom the power of the purse alone made formidable, and in consequence of which power they were able to obtain the redress of all other grievances. What would be the consequence if this power of the purse was not vested solely in parliament? All the privileges possessed by the people would fall at once to the ground, for they were inseparably connected with the assembling and sitting of parliament. The King was not bound to call a parliament, at specific times; but if he should neglect to call one for three years together, it was appointed that they should meet by the authority of the people. Would the house see the great and strong fence of all their liberties, the power of the purse, invaded in the slightest manner? and would they say that we had any sensible practicable security for any one privilege, if the crown had resources independent of the people? The question might be asked, Whether the crown could make use, for any public purpose, of money derived from private resources? He had no hesitation in saying, that it would be an overturning of the whole constitution, if the King could employ any funds, to a purpose not authorized by parliament. He went to the whole extent of this principle: if the throne of England had devolved to the house of Bourbon, would it have been a sufficient security to Englishmen, that the King of Great Britain being also the King of France, could not apply the immense sums which he might have drawn from that flourishing kingdom, to any purpose in England, unauthorized by the Parliament of England? Would it have been sufficient for them to say, "our liberties are safe because you cannot put your hand into our pockets?" No: it was seen and felt that there could be no security for the liberties of England, if the King of England could draw resources from another kingdom, of so immense a kind as to render him superior to the power of the purse in the hands of their own parliament. They had not the

same fear with respect to the Elector of Hanover, because no resources could be drawn from that place dangerous to British liberty. The principle, however, had ever been present to the minds of men, and both in committing the hereditary revenue which the King drew from the colonies, and also in settling the constitution of Ireland, care had been taken that the crown should not have the means of drawing into his hands sums that might be injurious to the country. One of the most plausible arguments that was used for the American war, and the only one indeed which could tend to give it popularity, was, that by giving to the parliament the power of taxing America, they would take out of the hands of the crown the revenue which America might voluntarily grant, without the cognizance of parliament. In regard to contributions, it was ridiculous to say that they were voluntary : there was no such thing as a pure voluntary subscription, when that subscription was to be made for the crown. If this was true, even in the time of James I. how much more so must it be at this time now, when the officers of customs and excise, placemen, pensioners, and dependents upon the crown, were greater in number than all the constituent body of the kingdom, certainly more in number than that part of the people who nominated and returned a majority of that house. Would it be said then that, when the influence of the crown had come to such a height, and when that influence was so strenuously exerted, when all the arts of intrigue were added to the menaces of power, that a subscription demanded by the crown could be said to be voluntary ? He would venture to say, that not one in twenty was a free voluntary subscriber. The extent to which the principle might be driven, was pretty well exemplified in the late meeting for Berwick, a meeting which he did not hesitate to pronounce illegal, and which could only be aggravated by its being founded upon an application from the minister. At this

meeting they had resolved to raise two troops of horse for their defence, which should be at the disposal of the crown, to go to any part of Great Britain. To defray this expense, they resolved upon a kind of land tax, by which they imposed a levy, amounting to eight months of their annual cessment. Regretting, however, that they could not at once extend this to the property of those who were absent, they drew up an application to them, by which they stigmatize all who shall refuse to subscribe. The only plea, in favour of this proceeding, that could be urged was, that though the money was subscribed, yet it was not to be applied in any other manner than by consent of parliament. Now, he called upon any one to produce a single law by which it could be proved, that where it was lawful for the people on one hand to subscribe, and for the crown, on the other, to receive it, it was equally lawful for the parliament to direct the application of it. But suppose the legality of such interference demonstrable, might it not be rendered nugatory by the danger of waiting for such an application in the pressure of present and imminent difficulties? Thus, on the subject of landing foreign troops, it was contended that there existed no danger, because ministers, in doing so, were at the same time bound to give notice thereof to the house. Neither in that, nor the present instance, could any law, bearing such construction or necessity be produced; on the contrary, if it was legal for the King to accept, it was equally so for him to apply the benevolences which might be granted. But he asserted that there was nothing contained in the statutes to justify any other grants than those by parliament; but that the direct contrary was deducible from them all; to prove which, he took a review of the different periods in which the business of benevolences were agitated. The first instance we had of benevolences, was in the time of Edward IV. The next was in the case of Pym in the 4th James I. upon his resisting the pay-

ment of certain duties, levied without the consent of parliament. The arguments used upon this occasion, fully established the point, though not the principal one in discussion—that the King had no right to such means of support. It was true that this only marked compulsory benevolence; but that was the evil felt, and to remedy which, they, of that day, particularly turned their minds. Compulsory gifts were one offence, and gifts, however free, were another, and no less a breach of the privileges of that house than the other; and, therefore, however he might seem to jest the other day, he was perfectly justifiable when he said the Serjeant at Arms ought to be sent to take up the chairman who should subscribe to the resolutions of a meeting, violating those privileges, by violating a supply.

The next case in point of order, after the petition of right, was the case in 1715, of Mr. Oliver St. John, who, on account of a letter which he wrote to the Mayor of Marlborough, was prosecuted in the Star Chamber, on the 15th of April, 1615—In this letter Mr. Oliver St. John stated the objections which he had to this kind of benevolence; first he said, “it was not only without, but against reason, that the commons in their several and particulars, should be relievers or suppliers of His Majesty’s wants, who neither know his wants, nor the sums that may be raised to supply them.—Secondly, it was against reason that the particular and several commons distracted, should oppose their judgment and discretion to the judgment and discretion of the land assembled in parliament, who had there denied any such aid.” Mr. St. John farther said, “That some for fear, some in pride, some to please others, would enter into this contribution; and he stated it to be against the constitution, and a violation of the great and solemn oath taken by the King at his coronation, for the maintaining of the laws, liberties, and customs of this noble realm.” For this letter of Mr. Oliver St. John’s, he was

persecuted in the Star Chamber, and his sentence was to be fined 5000*l.* and to be imprisoned for life. The great Sir Francis Bacon, was then Attorney-General, and the speech he made upon that trial was most memorable. He defended the measure of benevolence to the crown, by most extraordinary arguments:—"God forbid," said Sir Francis, "any body should be so wretched as to think that the obligation of love and duty from the subject to the King should be joint and not several. No, my lords, it is both—The subject petitioneth to the King in parliament; he petitioneth likewise out of parliament. The King, on the other side, gives graces to the subject in parliament; he gives them likewise, and poureth them upon his people out of parliament; and so, no doubt, the subject may give to the King, in parliament, and out of parliament." Sir Francis goes on, that it was thought fit by the lords in council, to make a proof of the love and attachment of the country; and they devised and directed letters unto the sheriffs and justices, declaring what had been done here in London, and wishing the country might be moved, especially men of value: and Sir Francis, in the course of his argument, defended the measure, because it was to work upon example as a thing not devised, or projected, or required; no, not so much as recommended, until many who were never moved nor dealt with *ex mero motu* had freely and frankly sent in their presents; so that the letters were rather like letters of news, of what was done at London, than otherwise! and we know *exempla ducunt non trahunt*; do but lead, they do not draw nor drive. The letter of Henry Dundas was exactly on the model of the letter of the council of James I. Sir Francis's whole argument went upon the idea that this benevolence was not an exaction called a benevolence, and which the Duke of Buckingham spoke of in his oration to the city. His definition of a benevolence was extremely curious;

he defined it to be, "not what the subject of his good will would give, but what the King of his good will would take." And after these valuable arguments in favor of benevolence, Sir Francis ran through three pages of panegyric, on His Majesty, as the greatest warrior, finest writer, most sublime philosopher, most christian Monarch, and the handsomest man in Europe; and upon these arguments, as he said, the Star Chamber fined Mr. Oliver St. John 5000*l.* and condemned him to imprisonment during the King's pleasure. If the Star Chamber was revived in this country, or if the Scotch law, or rather the practice of the Scotch law, were introduced into this country, then, perhaps, this system of benevolence would have greater success than it was likely to have, as the example of Mr. Oliver St. John might be revived. Which of the two the right honorable and learned gentlemen would prefer to introduce, it was not possible for him to conjecture. Mr. Sheridan then came to the statute of the 13th of Charles II. which, in reality, settled the point then under the discussion of the house, for that statute, in its preamble, declared all voluntary aids or benevolences from the people to the crown, to be illegal. But, in consideration of the sudden and pressing necessity of the King, it did legalize a benevolence on that one occasion; under very strict limitations it directed that the subscription of no commoner should exceed the sum of two hundred pounds, nor that of a peer the sum of four hundred; it limited the duration of the benevolence, and there was a special provision that this statute should never be drawn in as a precedent for any future occasion. This statute was the law to this day; no one proceeding in the shape of a law had taken place since that time; for the bill of rights confirmed by inference the 13th of Charles II. though, like the petition of right, it confined itself to benevolences at the requisition of the crown. He could not conceive what possible case they could

ground themselves upon since the revolution, what authorities they meant to bring forward, or upon what practice it was their intention to justify their proceeding. The right honorable gentleman had thrown out an insinuation that he had authorities; it would be found with what reason he had ventured to make this assertion. He would venture to say, that in no instance was there a case to be found in any thing similar to the present. The example of 1745, when a rebellion was raging in the country, and parliament was not sitting, would surely not be mentioned as a pregnant example. It was one of those cases of extreme necessity, which superseded all the usual forms of proceeding, as well as all law: it was a case that struck at the vitals of the constitution, when government would not have merely been justified in taking the aids that were offered, but when they would have been justified if they had gone even to greater lengths, and had, by the proclamation of martial law, put the whole body of the people into arms, and removed the property of individuals from the reach of the common enemy. It was not from a case of such necessity that they ought, therefore, to argue; nor did he conceive that the right honorable gentleman would choose the case of 1756 as the ground of his justification. At that time, bounties were offered to such seamen as should enter as volunteers, by the city of London and the other great bodies; and the Earl of Chatham had written a letter of thanks to the city upon the occasion. But would the Earl of Chatham, if he were now alive, adopt, or even countenance, the unprecedented measure of his son? The case of offering bounties, in addition to the bounties given by the crown, was very different from a benevolence to the crown. The money was not given to the King; nor did it come in any shape or manner into the hands of government: it was to be given simply to those individuals who, in consequence of an act of parliament, entered into His Majesty's ser-

vice, and who had already received the sum directed by parliament. It was a measure which countenanced a measure of parliament, but which did not go farther: it did not add one man to the grant of parliament, but it simply held forth additional inducements to the country to enter into the service, held to be necessary by the parliament. The next instance was that of 1778, and this was of the same sort as the former: parliament was adjourned for the purpose, as it was said, of procuring the additional aids at a time when they were not sitting. During this adjournment, accidental or contrived, certain persons in the city of London, and otherwise, did resolve to raise sums, and to put them under the disposal of a committee, for the purpose of buying clothing, &c. But in this the instance differed from the present, that it was not done at the requisition of the crown; that His Majesty's ministers were not seen in it; and that surely was not one of the cases in which the ministers were to find their great authorities? Great authorities were to be found at that time against the measure: a right honorable gentleman then member for Bristol, (Mr. Burke) spoke with his usual splendor against a measure that struck, as he said, at the very foundation of public security.

Another great authority, who countenanced the Earl of Chatham in the case of 1756, and whom the right honorable gentleman would not, he conceived, despise upon that account, objected to the measure with that warm zeal for the constitution which had distinguished his honourable life (Earl Camden.) The authority of Mr. Dunning, and of many other most eminent men, was against His Majesty's ministers on a measure that had not half the aggravation of the present. As to the case of 1782, at which the right honorable gentleman seemed to glance on a former night, and which he meant to insinuate was a proof that his right honorable friend had then countenanced the principle of the measure, it was,

in his opinion, totally inapplicable : it was, in reality, a measure that might have been deemed, both on account of the time at which it came, and of its own nature, to be highly democratic ; for immediately after a letter of the Duke of Richmond, and of his motion for universal suffrage, it was a recommendation to the people to take arms for their own mutual defence ; but not putting them into the hands of the crown, it was stating what was undoubtedly constitutional—that, for mutual defence and for general security, it would be wise and prudent for every man to be armed ; but it did not recommend that levies should be made for the crown, or that money should be put into the disposal of the crown. He had thus gone through the precedents in the History of England ; and he concluded from them that the present measure was clearly hostile both to the spirit of the constitution, and to all the sound usages of the country. His third proposition—that, even if it could be reconciled with the constitution, and with custom, it was still a measure unwise, futile, and unfit to be resorted to—would soon receive a better illustration than any that it could derive from his arguments ; for it would soon be seen what would be the result of the present attempt, for there never was a moment so favorable for the experiment as the present. The country had all the motives to a grand display of benevolence that any possible concurrence of events could engender. The expenses of the present year would be at least five-and-thirty millions sterling, for the payment of the interest of debts, and for the maintenance of this most glorious war ; a war essential to so many grand objects, that it was almost impossible to enumerate them : a war for the salvation of the British constitution, and for the safety of kings—a war for the Christian religion—a war for privileges and distinctions—a war for human order—a war for the safety of this country, and for the security of the whole of Europe—a war,

in short, in which all the emotions of the soul were to be roused, and in which, if ever it could be expected to draw a great sum from the source of benevolence, the exertion of the people on the present occasion was likely to be such as to demonstrate the extent of this species of resource; for if the people were only to advance their money upon all the inducements which were held out—one pound for religion, one pound for Kings, one pound for the British constitution, one pound for human order;—what must not be expected from a generous and opulent people? He would be bold to foretel, however, that it would be treated with merited disdain, and it would be as unproductive as it would be oppressive and odious. Nothing could be more idle at the same time, than to call it voluntary. When the enormous influence of the crown was considered, running through all its channels of patronage, terror, the revenue laws, the chain of dependance, and all the varieties of aspect under which, to the most distant parts of the kingdom, it entered and pervaded every place, it would be impossible for men to act from their own motion, or to resist the torrent of this prevailing power. Nor could it be considered the most equal mode; since some from ostentation, and more from interest, in the view of deriving advantage from the subscriptions to be raised by getting rank for their relations, or contracts, or agencies, would be induced to subscribe, not what they could afford, not what could be considered as a genuine resource, but as the aggregate of pride, and mercenary spirit for a time, and which could not be resorted to often, without fallacy and defeat. It was one of those instances in which the right honorable gentleman mimicked the Jacobins, as, indeed, he mimicked the Jacobins in every thing. It was not the smallest of the evils of the present system, that all the miserable follies which we reprobated, we were doomed daily to imitate. Instead of displaying a

manly and honorable confidence in the loyalty and attachment of the people of this country, to the person of the King, and to the system of the constitution; the government set up a dark, gloomy, Jacobinic system of inquisition, destructive of the concord, character, and happiness of society; instead of opposing to the sanguinary example of the Jacobins, and of their horrid punishments, the example of a mild administration of our criminal laws, and shewing, by the beneficence of our courts, the beauty and efficacy of a well-modelled and rational system of freedom, we had striven only to imitate their conduct, by straining our criminal laws beyond the example of all former times, the blackest in the annals of England, and shocking the feelings of humanity, by punishing out of all proportion to the offence; and now, instead of opposing to their irregular, unsubstantial, and inefficient schemes of finance, a system of solid, equal, regular, and permanent revenue; we had adopted their very project, and grasped at a shewy but miserable phantom, which would be found to elude our power, and leave us in greater wretchedness than ever. In every way in which he could view the subject, it was a measure calculated not merely to delude the public for the time, and to be vexatious and oppressive as far as it went, but to be seemingly adopted for no other purpose, under heaven, except to take advantage of the decay of all popular spirit, for the establishment of a principle ruinous to the liberties of the country. He should conclude, therefore, with moving, "That it is a dangerous and unconstitutional measure for the people of this country to make any loan, subscription, or benevolence to the crown, to be used for any public purpose, without the previous consent of parliament."

In reply to Mr. Wyndham and other speakers against the motion,

Mr. Sheridan said, that at so late an hour, when he and the house must both be exhausted, and after the very imperfect manner in which his former arguments were answered, he should have had the less occasion for troubling the house at any length, were it not for the extraordinary speech delivered by Mr. Windham. There was a time when it would be with the most sensible regret that he could have heard any improper motives ascribed to him from that quarter. Indeed, since he had so strangely changed the line of his political conduct, and adopted a new party, he had shewn himself so wonderfully dextrous in the art of enveloping his arguments, his principles, and his attachments, in the most impenetrable mazes of obscurity; he had so blended his new-born zeal for administration with expressions of the tenderest affection for his friend, Mr. Fox, that it was not till the present night that he had unequivocally spoken out. He warned the members of the opposition of the improper company with which they had associated, and ridiculed their pretensions of being the exclusive champions of the constitution, insinuating that the defence of it would be safer in other hands; but the right honorable gentleman ought surely to recollect that they were the same company and the same champions with whom he, till very lately, acted in apparent union and in perfect confidence. In order to stigmatize his old friends in the most odious manner, he drew an insidious parallel between their motives, and those which actuated Sir J. Hynde Cotton and other jacobites, in the year 1746, who could discover no danger in the approach of the Pretender, because they were so greatly interested in his success. If in truth he knew, and really believed that there were such persons amongst the present members of opposition, why did he not honestly and manfully stand up and proclaim them, instead of having recourse to skulking and insidious jeers.

Here Mr. Yorke rose, while several members were calling Mr. Sheridan to order. The Speaker demanded of Mr. Yorke whether he meant to speak to order, and no answer being returned, Mr. Sheridan proceeded.

The honorable gentleman, he said, who by his rising interrupted the scope of his observations, could not be supposed to rise without some motive, and he thought him too fair and manly to retract any intention he might have had in so doing; he was glad to find him take time for deliberation, which would perhaps enable him to digest his purpose, better than he might have done upon the sudden impulse of the moment. Before Mr. Windham sneered at the company in which the opposition acted, he should have reflected on the strange phalanx with which he was himself united. He could not well forget the triumph which he used to feel in exposing the unconstitutional principles upon which Mr. Pitt came into office, in uncasing his artifices, his subterfuges, and high prerogative principles; in representing him as an object of distrust and jealousy, and holding him up to the contempt and derision of his country. By a change of sentiment, or rather of side, as extraordinary as unprecedented, he was now found the ready advocate of every measure of administration, which certainly deserves the same character still which he formerly ascribed to it. The right honorable gentleman thought he had a great advantage in repeating his (Mr. Sheridan's) objections to stopping the supplies in the year 1784; but on consideration he would find that this made directly against his purpose. He was very well aware that the principal control which that house could exercise over the crown was by withholding the supplies; but he was fully of opinion that this control should never be exercised but when it could be done so with effect. If it was not effectual, it would be no more than a chimera. At the time alluded to, all that the house of commons could withhold was the land and malt tax, by refusing

which, the crown would feel no personal distress, though it could not fail to operate most injuriously upon commerce. It would therefore be nugatory to stop supplies to the king, by which stoppage, in fact, the king would be no loser. He also considered that such was the state of the public mind at that time, and such the disposition of certain persons to avail themselves of it, that it was much to be apprehended the crown would be able to find supplies in the same unconstitutional manner which he was now arraigning; and then a principle, or at least a precedent, be established, of infinitely more danger than any that could result from granting the supplies. From this it would appear that there was not the smallest variance between the principles which he then held, and those which he maintained now; for his advice at that time was given upon grounds of prudence and expediency. Indeed he must consider it as some degree of hardship that he was thus called upon a second time to answer those arguments which he had already anticipated in his opening speech. If there was any part of his conduct through life in which he felt himself free from any unjust imputation, it was that of inconsistency in his political principles and attachments. How little Mr. Windham could boast of a similar character would shortly appear from his expedition to Norwich in the year 1782. Mr. Windham said, that if he opposed the voluntary subscription then proposed upon the ground that it was illegal and unconstitutional, it was because such arguments were going at the time, and that his detestation of the American war superseded at the time the love of his country in such a degree, that he could not wish success to the British arms. He should have been more surprised at his thus forgetting a fact which occurred some years ago, if the failure of his memory had not been so lately exemplified in his forgetting also his former principles and attachments. But, in order to refresh his recollection, he must be

under the necessity of stating to him what their former intimacy and friendship enabled him to do; that all his conversations at this time expressed the strongest conviction of the illegality of these subscriptions, and that their illegality and unconstitutional tendency formed the basis of those arguments he used to the meeting which he attended at Norwich. He did injustice to his own character by saying, that he employed those arguments because they were going at the time; for it was not to be supposed that a grave and able man, employed upon a serious and important expedition, would pick up his arguments by the way like blackberries upon the bushes as he went along, to serve up as a feast to politicians. He perfectly agreed with the right honorable gentlemen, that there were few political rules so strictly to be adhered to, as to preclude all deviations in cases of extreme emergency; but that emergency must be found to exist at present, as in the year 1745, before the deviation could be properly justified. There were also several maxims, an occasional deviation from which may be attended with no very serious consequences; but there were likewise some fundamental, seminal, and vital principles, an infraction of which, like flaws upon a diamond, always debased, and frequently destroyed their value. Of this description was any pecuniary aid given to the crown, through any other medium than that of parliament; for whatever may be its avowed purpose, it was liable to be employed in corrupting the house, and overturning the liberties of the people. He had already anticipated the use that would be made of bounties given by corporate and other bodies, to encourage the levy of troops which had been voted by parliament. This practice, whether legal and constitutional or not, was constantly connived at by parliament—first, because it was useful from the encouragement it offered—and, secondly, because it was likely to have no bad effect; for it was no free gift, nor did the

crown or its servants ever handle a shilling of it. It was also true, that the house expressed no jealousy at the *promise* of a ship to be furnished by private benevolence, and the event shewed that they were right, as that promise, in the end, turned out not to be a *gift*. He must, however, do the noble lord, to whom he alluded, the justice to own, that he gave the house a much more valuable present in the right honorable gentleman who now possessed their confidence. [Lord Lonsdale, at that time Sir James Lowther, first returned Mr. Pitt into parliament for the borough of Appleby.] He contended, that ministers could have no other purpose in view, by soliciting this subscription, in what he represented to be a clandestine way, but to assert this high prerogative in the crown. It was impossible that they could expect any considerable assistance from the contributions, or if they before entertained any hopes of that nature, the late resolutions of the Surrey meeting, declaring it to be unconstitutional, gave him very little reason to expect that it would be generally productive. Upon the whole, he was of opinion, that they would find more subscribers this night to the motion of the previous question, than they were likely to find towards defraying the expenses of the army. And here he could not but remark upon the conduct of the Attorney-General, in contending for the legality of the proceedings, and not daring to meet it with a direct negative, which he knew would not accord with the sense of the country in general. He quoted, indeed, voluminous authorities of lawyers, living and dead; Lord Bacon, Lord Coke, Lord Hardwicke, and Lord Ashburton, of the dead, summoned in support of the doctrine; and of the living, Lord Camden as well as Lord Thurlow, who seemed peculiarly the god of the gentleman's idolatry. But he argued, that these illustrious men did not actually hold the opinions that were imputed to them; and a note of Lord Hardwicke was found, which ex-

pressly contradicted the extra-judicial judgment he on another occasion pronounced. The learned gentleman finding himself unable to defend his position by any direct authority in point, was reduced to have recourse to some *et tu quoque* observations applied to Mr. Fox, which could never be reverted to but in default of better arguments, and which had been sufficiently done away in the speech of his right honorable friend. In the whole range of his reasoning the learned gentleman contented himself with barely mentioning the statute of 13 Charles II. but wisely abstained from any observations upon it. But as a succedaneum for this, the learned gentleman stated, that Mr. Wilkes, who, in the year 1778, moved a resolution similar to that of this night, had, upon consulting legal authority, altered his opinion. How far the authority of law had influence with that gentleman, would appear from an extract which he read of a conference between Mr. Wilkes and some other persons respecting gentlemen of the long robe. From this it was evident, that Mr. Wilkes held the profession of the law in no small contempt, representing the constitution as a piece of clock-work, and the lawyers as under-workmen capable of constructing a wheel and a chain, but totally ignorant of the principles which set the machine in motion. In order to draw the attention of the learned gentleman to this, he could also add—*quod nota bene*. In opposition to the authorities on the other side, he quoted that of Mr. Hargrave, the commentator upon Lord Coke, to whom he paid high compliments, and whose opinion entirely corresponded with his own. After representing that the admission of this new doctrine connected with the other doctrines that were avowed upon the landing of the Hessian troops, would render necessary a new bill of rights, he took notice of Mr. Powys's observation that the ministers could not act illegally till they had actually applied the subscription-money without the consent of parliament, and ridiculed the idea of

waiting to accuse a minister of illegal proceedings till he was at the head of 50,000 men. From the opposition made to his motion, he argued badly for its success, and in case of its failure, should think an act to legalise these proceedings would be highly necessary.

The house divided on the previous question, moved by the Attorney-General. Ayes 204; noes 34.

MARCH 31.

VOLUNTEER CORPS FOR 1782.

Mr. SHERIDAN rose to move for papers which appeared to him, he said, so much of course to grant, that it would not be possible reasonably to object to their being laid before the house. Had he entertained any doubt on that subject, he should of course have given notice of his intention to move for them. He would however assign a reason for moving for these papers. It was because a learned gentleman, in the course of the debate on Friday night, had quoted extracts from them, and laid a considerable stress on these partial parts, in order to prove, as he said, that a subscription for raising troops had been thought of by administration in the year 1782. He therefore moved, "that an humble address be presented to his Majesty, humbly praying, he will be pleased to give directions for laying before the house, copies of all the answers received by His Majesty's Secretary of State, to the circular letter written by the Earl of Shelburne, containing plans for raising voluntary corps for the internal defence of the kingdom for the year 1782."

Mr. Pitt said, that the same motion was made in the year 1782, and opposed by the right honorable gentleman, (Mr. Fox,) who was then Secretary of State, and when the honorable gentleman who made this motion was himself in an official situation in the government of this country. The house had then thought fit to refuse these very papers: for the sake of the consistency of the journals, therefore, he was desirous it should not appear that papers which had been refused

— *when the subject was in agitation, should be granted when they became merely matter of history. He desired the journals to be read, which being done, it appeared that a motion was made for those papers on the 11th of June, on which a debate arose, and the house divided, when the motion passed in the negative 68; against it 22.*

Mr Sheridan ridiculed, as an affected regard for consistency, in order to conceal an evident subterfuge, the Chancellor of the Exchequer's present declaration for consistency. The real esteem he had for that merit was evident in the manner he refused on one day, and agreed the next, to receive the petition of Mr. Palmer; and to refuse, and grant, the Secretary of State's circular letter to the lord-lieutenants. The truth was, that this was a scheme of the minister to make a false impression on some part of the house, and as many as he could of the public. The Attorney-General was to come forward with garbled accounts, and partial extracts of returns to Lord Shelburne's letter in 1782, and from these to argue that subscriptions had been agreed upon for supporting the executive power in the year 1782. This was so unworthy an attempt, that he must take the sense of the house upon it; and he had farther to say, that, if defeated now, he should bring this subject forward again in a more formal shape.

The house divided: for the motion 18; against it 86.

APRIL 1.

BILL FOR THE ENCOURAGEMENT, &c. OF VOLUNTEER CORPS FOR THE GENERAL DEFENCE OF THE COUNTRY.

Mr. Francis said, that before he offered his opinion on this bill, he could not but complain of a practice, which generally prevailed in that house, and which in effect took away all freedom of debate, by confining every discussion, on subjects of importance, to three or four individuals. That, on this point, he spoke with great impartiality. That a few distinguished persons, by occupying, the whole time of the house with speeches of many hours, not only wore out the patience of the few who attended to them, while a majority of the mem-

bers, perhaps, were taking their nourishment or their repose, but precluded all others from offering their opinion ever so shortly, for want of an opportunity of being heard even for a moment. That, if it was the object of eloquence to weary and deaden the attention of an unhappy audience; to exhaust all human patience; to efface, by endless repetition, an impression once made; to stupify, rather than to convince; and finally, to lose the votes of friends, whose constitution sunk under the intolerable burden imposed upon their faculties; then, indeed, the gentlemen he alluded to were supremely eloquent.

He then, in allusion to the intended claim, authorising subscriptions, observed that, "it had been attempted to prove principles by precedents, instead of justifying practice by principle. That every one of the instances, so relied on, might be nothing better than abuses, which, being but inconsiderable, perhaps, in the amount, or evidently harmless in the application, had passed without notice. But now the question comes directly before us.—We are at issue on the point of right.—Will you suffer it to be decided, not by its own intrinsic reason, not by the principles of the constitution, but by some special facts and instances of a modern date, in which the question of right was not debated? I do not believe that the examples produced, have been fairly quoted; but if they were, what is it to us, who had no concern in those transactions, and who are now contending for the truth of a constitutional principle? Instances of wrong, done by others, if they were ever so numerous, are not to conclude against my right. What is it to me that such and such things were done in the administration of Mr. Fox or Mr. Pitt, or Lord Rockingham or Lord Shelburne? Were they right when they were done? If they were not, now that they are questioned, that is the time to condemn and put a stop to them.

Mr. Fox in reply, said, without wishing to enter upon one of those long speeches which the honorable member had condemned, was desirous of justifying himself from the inconsistency of conduct imputed to him from what happened in the year 1782. His own character was undoubtedly dear to him, as must be the case of every man; but he was impelled with equal force to this justification, from the character of the Marquis of Rockingham having been also involved in the charge. The memory of that illustrious person, he trusted would still meet with many defenders in that house, and he was sure there were some (Mr. Burke was supposed to be alluded to) who could not be indifferent to any imputation thrown upon it. He then went at length, into the meaning of the circular letters sent to manufacturing towns by the Earl of Shelburne in the year 1782, and argued that they had no similarity whatever with the present application.

Mr. Burke declared that he should not be unmindful of the hint given by Mr. Francis, and drawn from a precept in a writer of very high authority with the gentleman opposite to him (Captain Morris)—

"Solid men of Boston make no long potations,

"Solid men of Boston make no long orations,

"Bow! wow! wow!"

And this injunction he could the more readily comply with, as he had in fact very little to say upon the subject. At the period alluded to, Mr. Fox must know, that, though he held an office supposed to be very high and very advantageous, yet he was as completely ignorant of what was in the cabinet as any man in England.

Mr. Sheridan felt himself much disappointed in that kind of defence, which he had a right to expect from Mr. Burke, of the conduct of the Marquis of Rockingham, and supposed, that the injunction against "long orations" was not the only moral precept in that system of ethics alluded to, which served to regulate the conduct of that right honorable gentleman. He would take the liberty to remind him of another passage in the same approved writer, in which he says,

"He went to *Daddy Jenky*, by *Trimmer* Hall attended,

"In such company, good lack! how his *morals* must be mended.

"Bow! wow! wow!"

He then represented that Mr. Fox had mentioned the justification of the noble marquis to have been one of his chief motives for entering into the explanation; whereas Mr. Burke was contented to declare his ignorance of the proceeding, and leave the memory of the Marquis of Rockingham to be defended by others. He then arraigned Mr. Burke of inconsistency, in now complaining of the place which he formerly held, and the loss of which he bewailed immediately after the administration to which he belonged was dismissed. He called to his remembrance the speech which he made upon that occasion, with a professed sensibility in all the enjoyments of which he was deprived, and, amongst others, the music of drums and fifes, which regularly afforded him a morning serenade.

Mr. Burke having replied,

Mr. Sheridan declared, that it was a great mistake to suppose that he made any attack upon the morality of Mr. Burke, for if his words had been attended to, it would appear that he supposed him

to possess it in such superabundance, that he might even spare some part of it for the right honorable gentlemen that surrounded him. (Mr. Burke was sitting upon the Treasury Bench.) In speaking of his official situation, he did no more than repeat his own expressions; and if he had attended to the last debate, he would have heard direct charges of inconsistency brought forward against the Marquis of Rockingham.

Mr. Sheridan thought it no light matter to sanction, for the first time, calling in military aid to the civil power, and was sorry to hear Mr. Pitt conceived any danger whatever from the interior of the country. He himself saw no great cause of fear from the attempts of France, but none at all from any co-operation which they were likely to receive in this country. If, however, the power of calling out these corps to suppress riots only, was to exist while there was a rebellion, or the appearance of it, he should not have objected to it.

Mr. Mitford (the Solicitor General) thought this bill perfectly consistent with the true principles of the constitution. In all similar cases the sheriff might raise the posse comitatus, and in ancient times, assizes of arms and commissions of array took place at the direction of the crown, though now they had fallen into disuse. The present mode of arming the gentry and yeomanry of the kingdom was therefore not new, and was in fact only arming property for its own protection.

Mr. Sheridan observed, that the *posse comitatus* was not under His Majesty's command, nor governed by officers of his appointment, and this constituted a material difference. He should have thought it would have been sufficient to revive the ancient practice of commission of array and assizes of arms.

APRIL 7.

VOLUNTEER CORPS, &c. BILL FOR THE GENERAL DEFENCE OF THE COUNTRY.

The following clause was moved by Mr. Serjeant Adair, to be added as a rider to this bill.—“That individuals having entered into subscriptions to raise money as an aid to government, the same should be paid into the Receiver of the Land Tax in each county, and receipts granted by him for the respective sums received; that those sums should be paid into the Receiver-General of His Majesty’s Exchequer, and similar receipts given by him, the whole to be applied only to such purposes as were intended by the subscribers, under the authority of, and particularly specified in this bill. And if any surplus remained in the hands of the Receiver-General of the Exchequer, to be applied only as Parliament might think proper to direct.”

Mr. SHERIDAN said, that he supported the motion, although it was with reluctance that he gave his consent to any motion of the kind. He remained convinced of the illegality of the measure altogether, and of its being an unfit mode for the government of the country to resort to for supply; but if it was forced upon him, he would prefer undoubtedly that it should receive the sanction of parliament in the way that the clause of the learned serjeant proposed than that it should stand as a matter of undisputed right. He would not go again into the question which had been discussed at so much length, but he must take notice of one argument which had been used, and which in his mind was weak and childish to a degree of imbecility. It was that these benevolences were not to be objected to on account of their smallness, and that the argument could not apply to them as unconstitutional or dangerous in the degree to which they could be carried. Nothing was so certain that principles of this important kind must be sacred, and that they could admit of no degrees. If once they acknowledged the right of the crown to apply for revenue to the people, otherwise than through the channel of that house, the very first and most important bond for the

maintenance of all their privileges were cancelled. The house knew well how jealous they were of the lord's interference in a money bill; they would not suffer them to alter an iota in a bill which laid even a fine of two-pence on the subject. And yet they were to suffer this measure to pass without check, which thus might grow into a most mischievous practice, and become infinitely too great for their future control.

Mr. Windham followed, and referred to a charge of inconsistency brought against him: he having in 1778 called private subscriptions for government, unconstitutional; and in 1794 admitted them to be the contrary.

Mr. Sheridan, in explanation, said, that there were fundamental principles in government and constitution, which could not be entrenched upon in any degree, and such as their ancestors had been careful should not be violated. *Principiis obsta*, was the doctrine which in just jealousy they had acted upon, but which the right honorable gentleman, in his deliberate reply to a former speech, was desirous to abolish.

The clause was negatived without a division.

APRIL 8.

MR. HARRISON'S MOTION FOR TAXING PLACEMEN DURING THE WAR.

Mr. Harrison moved, "that leave be given to bring in a bill for the purpose of appropriating a certain part of the emoluments arising from pensions and sinecure places, for the service of the public, during the continuance of the war, at the disposal of parliament; and also for the purpose of appropriating a part of the emoluments arising from efficient places, amounting to more than a specified sum, to be applied to the same purpose."

Mr. SHERIDAN declared, that notwithstanding the singular language held by the right honorable gentleman who had just sat down, he would dare to

defend the measure proposed, and subject himself to the imputation so liberally bestowed by him upon all who should think seriously in its favour. Before, however, he proceeded to a discussion of the question, he could not avoid congratulating certain gentleman on the other side of the house, on the silence which they preserved upon the occasion, and which appeared so characteristic of those sentiments which no doubt they would evince by their decision. If they had been silent, however, they did not appear absolutely void of sensibility; for when the honorable gentleman stated to them a precedent in justification of his motion, they stared, as if they had heard of some antiquated tale of the virtuous days of Greece or Rome, not of an instance of the conduct which this country had ever adopted or put in practice. Adverting to the arguments just advanced by the right honorable gentleman, he confessed he felt a degree of astonishment inconceivable; and particularly so as coming from him of all men living; nor could he, without having heard him, have believed it possible he could possess so absolute a forgetfulness of all that had past at former periods, and of transactions in which he had himself shone so conspicuously. The right honorable gentleman had rebuked the seconder of the motion for noticing the mode in which the minister had come into power, and said, of what consequence was it how one came in, or how he went out. Does he himself so totally forget those sentiments which he has so firmly recorded, and by which he has branded to all posterity the mode in which that minister had entered on and persevered in the possession of his present station? He had expressed his astonishment at the idea of that house attempting to measure the proportion of rewards which the crown was to distribute. Does he again forget that he had himself done precisely the same thing when he brought forward the bill known by his name, and which reflected so much honour on him, for regu-

lating and limiting the civil list of the crown ; and in which he had restricted the amount of the salaries or rewards which were to be annexed to various offices ; among the rest, to his own, of paymaster to the forces, which he reduced to a salary of 4000*l.* per annum ? In like manner, and upon the same principle, did the minister act upon a former occasion, when he limited the salaries of the First Lord of the Treasury, the Secretaries of State, and other great officers ; in both instances trenching upon the asserted right of the crown. But does the right honorable gentleman mean to assert that the crown possesses the sole right of judging what rewards were to be bestowed upon public servants ? Then he would ask him who it was that is obliged to pay those rewards ? He had put the case of a private family, and asked whether the master was not the proper judge in the distribution of rewards ; and if those rewards should be the same to all classes of his servants ? He was ready to adopt the principle of his comparison, and to agree, that in both cases, those who pay, were the proper judges of what should be paid. The next principle upon which the right honorable opposed the present motion, was, on account of the discontent which the exposure of the numberless places now enjoyed, might occasion throughout the country ; and yet, what was the principal and leading feature upon which his bill proceeded ? To shew the evils attendant on enormous places, and to produce reform in those evils by abolishing a number of those places. Where at that time, was his tenderness, when he set so many adrift unprovided for and unprotected ? The public good he called it, which he considered as paramount to every other consideration, and to which he then thought that every other consideration was to give way. The right honorable gentleman ridiculed the present motion, because he conceived the saving it would produce would be but trifling. Did he himself consider the saving which his bill was to pro-

duce, as forming no object of attention? And yet he would affirm, that the utmost extent of savings under that bill was contemptible, and as nothing, compared to what might be produced by the measure now proposed. And where he talked of these savings not affording the poor of Norwich small beer to their suppers, they must be great swillers indeed; but, in fact, if well applied; they would afford a comfortable support for a great share of the poor of the whole kingdom. A short view of the detail of those places would readily establish this fact. In the first place, there was one single place (Auditor of the Exchequer) that had been enjoyed by a nobleman of considerable private fortune, from which he must have realized near half a million of money sterling. Observing here an honorable member (Mr. Rose,) writing, he humourously claimed his assistance, whom he considered as so well able to make such calculations, and observed, that if a more nice account should reduce the total to two or three hundred thousand pounds, there would be no great room for triumph. He particularly reprobated the practice of those, who, upon the present, as on all other occasions, particularly parliamentary reform, affected to reprobate any attempt at amendment, under the pretext, that a measure good in itself, and in its principle, might be productive of mischief, by being carried too far. If, as had been so pompously displayed upon various occasions, every thing we held dear was at stake, was it so preposterous to call on those who gained most by the present system, to give up part for the preservation of the remainder; or what should we say of that most unparliamentary and unconstitutional measure, the general subscription; at all events that subscription would be a bad criterion by which to judge of the public spirit; for he would be bold to say that the sum total of all that should be raised by that mode, would not amount to what might be saved in the suppression of sinecures. Take the whole amount of the subscriptions through-

out the kingdom, and they would not be found to exceed 200,000*l.* notwithstanding every exertion of influence and authority which had been used. He did not believe the minister meant to repeat this experiment next year, nor yet to admit that the public spirit was evaporated; there, therefore, could be no truth in the insinuation, that the French would suppose our resources exhausted by the present measure; but, on the contrary, they would see greater cause to dread us when they beheld us cutting up corruption by the root. When he heard the minister and others describing in such high-flown terms, the zeal with which the public spirit promoted the present subscription, he should have been considered as paying some gentlemen a bad compliment, if he were to estimate by their fortunes the amount of their subscriptions; especially when he saw that some who were so liberal in their praises and panegyric had annexed to their names the paltry sum of 50*l.* If, as was asserted, it was necessary for our existence to conquer the French, we must do it by beating them at their own weapons, and, like them, it would be necessary to make considerable sacrifices. Now a noble lord (Mornington) had upon a former debate stated, that property to the amount of 400*l.* a year, was effective only to the amount of 120*l.* and he wished ministers and gentlemen holding places to adopt this proposition, which, at four year's purchase, which he should be glad if it were the longest duration of the contest, would produce no inconsiderable income. For instance, if a noble cousin of the minister's (the Marquis of Buckingham) out of his place as teller of the exchequer, were to give 8000*l.* a year, that in four years would make a sum of 32,000*l.* Another cousin too (Lord Grenville) might apply 4000*l.* the amount of his place of Ranger of the Park, which he affected not to receive, but which notwithstanding, he would assert was in fact no saving at all to the public. The other Secretary of State, out of his multiplied places of Treasurer of

the Navy, President of the Board of Controul, &c. might devote the profits of one at least of those places to the same patriotic purpose. To these might be added, with, perhaps, singular propriety, a part of the profits of the gentleman (Mr. Rose) who was so expert at calculation; and who upon this subject possessed an experience and a source of knowledge not inferior to any of them. Here Mr. Sheridan stated that he had just had put into his hand a list of the places enjoyed by Mr. Rose, but which as being too long, he should decline to state. However, upon a cry of "Read! Read!" he proceeded to enumerate as follows: Clerk of the Parliament; Master of the Pleas Office; Surveyor of the Green Wax; Secretary to the Treasury, a place, no doubt, well known to many gentlemen of that house. Here hesitating, and the cry of "Read!" being repeated, he wished to know whether the gentleman was not sufficiently satisfied, after having heard four enumerated; in fact, there were two more on the paper, but being written with a pencil, he could not make them out. Returning to the subject before them, he observed, that the minister was much in the habit of boasting of the flourishing state of our commerce during this war; but he denied that this boast had any real foundation, if we attended to the difference between the present and late war. Then we were at war with four nations, whose maritime exertions were individually powerful: now we had to contend but with one, whose marine was at least crippled, if not annihilated. The state likewise of our manufactures, was a boast equally unfounded; for the observations of the gentleman (Mr. Coke,) who seconded the motion, was not, as asserted, confined to Norwich, but extended to the whole kingdom, throughout which, the manufacturers was starving, and could be rendered serviceable only by being made a soldier of again. That house had been every year accustomed to hear the minister make a display of the reduction of the national debt. Now

he would ask, when any thing substantial in that way was to take place ; the answer was obvious ; it was a dream which never could be realized. By the promises held out, we were to arrive at a peace establishment ; that is, that our income was to equal our expenditure, beside the million annual, towards the reduction of the debt, and the 200,000*l.* surplus. That period, notwithstanding these splendid promises had never yet arrived ; and he would affirm, in the most positive terms, never, by the event of this war, can now be expected ; because, if peace were happily established to-morrow, our establishments, whether military, naval, or civil, would be considerably higher than ever. And would the minister say, that our resources would increase in any proportion ? He was sure he could not. Another principle there was which called for their serious attention. The minister had formerly come forward with a pompous display of a plan, by which on any future war, it would be necessary to fund any debt to be contracted in such a manner, that the whole of it must be paid within a certain period. This principle he certainly adhered to, upon the first occasion that offered after its adoption. But has he preserved in it upon the present occasion ? No such thing ! It was abandoned and gone for ever ; and with it vanished away the most distant prospect of a reduction of the national debt. On the contrary, they had nothing to look to in the future, but, as in the past, the eternal plea of necessity to justify or excuse the repetition of new loans. An honorable member, (Mr. Drake) after a panegyric on the merits of inconsistency, which seemed to be now the only feature and characteristic of superior talents, claimed the right hereafter, notwithstanding his opposition to the present motion, to vote for the entire abolition of all sinecure places ; he did not mean to dispute that right with him now, more than he did the right which he claimed on a former occasion, to be as animated as he pleased ; he should only content

himself with declaring his satisfaction of being of the number of those dull, phlegmatic description of men, who boast of that uniformity of principle and practice, which he trusted would ever distinguish those with whom he had the honor and happiness to act. To those who were alarmed with the idea of the novelty of the present motion, he had to remind them, that in February, 1783, the present Chancellor of the Exchequer moved, in conformity to His Majesty's speech, for leave to bring in a bill, which was, in effect, but a continuance of that which reflected so much honor on a right honorable gentleman (Mr. Burke.) Of precisely the same nature was the present motion, which was not, as asserted by that gentleman, an attack upon places held for life, but in the words of the motion itself, referring to certain places; what those should be, which should be the object of the bill, the committee alone could decide. Thus the whole of that part of the argument of the right honorable gentleman upon that topic, fell to the ground. For these reasons it was, he declared his decided approbation and support to the motion before the house.

Mr. Rose replied to Mr. Sheridan, and in the course of his speech observed, "After all that had been said upon the question, what was the whole drift of the argument? It was an appeal to popular prejudices. Tax placemen and pensioners is a re-echoing of the popular cry; but he professed, he did not perceive why they should be more taxed than the honorable gentleman, as manager of his theatre, or than as a man who travelled the country with his puppet-show at his back.

Mr. Sheridan, in explanation, said, that his arguments had been mis-stated by Mr. Rose, for they went merely to induce the placemen to support the motion. He took notice of his having been once before the subject of the same joke (respecting his property in the theatre) in the same terse, neat, and classical terms by Mr. Rose. Another gentleman (Mr. Pitt) had, on a former occasion taken the same liberty; he trusted it would be the last time that there should be such unparliamentary allusion to the

situation, circumstances, profession, or occupation of any gentleman in that house.

The house divided ; for the motion 50 ; against it 117.

APRIL 11.

**BILL TO ENABLE SUBJECTS OF FRANCE TO
ENLIST AS SOLDIERS.**

Mr. Pitt moved the order of the day on the bill to enable His Majesty to employ the subjects of France on the continent of Europe, in the French West India islands,—at Guernsey and Jersey, and other places ; which, being read, he moved “ That the bill be now read a second time.”

Mr. SHERIDAN declared, he never had heard so extraordinary a bill defended in so extraordinary a manner ; it was even treated with a kind of civility, as if it had a claim to respect. The honorable gentleman (Mr. Pitt), seemed surprised at the objections of his honorable friend (Mr. Baker), and indeed that any objections at all should be made against it ; just as if it was a matter of course, and perfectly conformable to law, to take into the service of this country an immense body of Roman Catholics, foreigners, and men who had taken no test whatever. This was a decided declaration of change of system. An honorable gentleman (Mr. Jenkinson) had partly communicated this new plan of the operations of the campaign, which was to get into the interior of France. That plan should have been adopted last year ; instead of which, a narrow and miserable system had been pursued, that of attacking little, paltry, insignificant places. What new circumstance, he desired to ask, had occurred this year to make such a plan necessary ? Was it the circumstance of our having broken our faith with the people of Toulon ? Was it the circumstance of our having deceived the unfortunate royalists of La Vendee ? After every means of making an impression in France seemed to have va-

nished, a new light broke in upon us, and we were to adopt a measure, which there was not a single reason at present to justify, although there might have been last year. His objection to the measure was a fundamental one, and went to the whole bill at once, as unnecessary and unconstitutional. The motive assigned by an honorable general for his approbation of the bill, was one of the reasons why he objected to it; as he conceived nothing more cruel, or more devoid of feeling and humanity, than driving unfortunate persons into the field, with a certainty of destruction, either of falling in battle, or the more dreadful alternative of being taken prisoners, and hanged. If these Frenchmen in our armies should be so treated, on being taken in battle, were we to revenge their fate, and retaliate on the French prisoners in our possession? ["Yes," exclaimed Mr. Burke.] Good heaven! replied Mr. Sheridan—consider that the lives of millions may depend upon that single word—That you will introduce a system of human sacrifice, all over Europe, by such a measure—that you send these poor unfortunate beings into the field with halters around their necks, as part of their accoutrements. Nothing, he was persuaded, but the warmth which the honorable gentleman felt on ministerial questions, could have led him into an expression which might be the herald of cool massacre to many of our own troops. He hoped that the house would never place the armies of Great Britain in so deplorable a situation; that it would turn with horror from a system of barbarous and execrable warfare hitherto unknown in the history of civilized Europe. This was the first time in which it had been acknowledged, from ministerial authority, that France had "subjects;" and we might be assured, that the present government of that country would treat those subjects as rebels whenever they found them fighting in the pay of Great Britain. The paltry saving which it was said would accrue from the officers of those corps

not having half-pay after the war, should the object of it be unsuccessful, he could consider as no other than a delusion. The same had been said a few years since of the royalist corps in America; but at the conclusion of the war, these officers, driven from their homes, remained a heavy incumbrance on the gratitude of this country. Did any man pay his country so bad a compliment as to suppose, that the feelings and spirit of a British parliament would consent to send those unfortunate gentlemen into the field under such cruel circumstances as he had described, and after they had bled in our service, turn them adrift, to linger out their lives in melancholy meditations upon British benevolence? In a constitutional point of view, he held the bill to be a most dangerous one. Martial law, to which the men were to be subjected, was to be left entirely to His Majesty, without any limitation whatever. It might be made a law, that, in case of any disobedience to *any order*, they should be punished with death; and it was not impossible that the King might be persuaded by his advisers to employ that army in overthrowing the free constitution of this country. It was, besides, natural to conclude, that a body of men, smarting under the lash, and detesting even the name of liberty, might be inclined to do any thing that might bring about that despotism which was so dear to them; on that ground, therefore, placing them under the power of the crown left little security for the liberties of Englishmen. Mr. Sheridan said, he did not expect to find the observations of his honorable friend (Mr. Baker), on the subject of troops being brought into this country for exercise, treated in so jocular a manner. He had no objection to the right honorable gentleman growing more and more facetious every day; but he wished him to confine his wit to suitable occasions. The right honorable gentleman's idea of exercise, could mean nothing else than military array. It had been said, that there could be no danger from these troops, be-

cause they were not to come beyond a certain distance from the coast ; such an assertion was treating them like school boys ; for in what other light did that part of the bill consider the foreign troops, who were not to go out beyond their *bounds* ; and if they did, our messengers were to go to them with the bill in their hands, and say, " You are a naughty army ; do not attempt to stir an inch beyond the limits assigned you ; get back again to your proper ground." Such was to be the language which a bit of paper (a scare-crow carried in the hands of our messengers, or stuck on a finger-post) was to use to an army of 40 or 50,000 men, embodied in Kent or Sussex, and under the absolute command of His Majesty. To many it might seem of no trifling consequence to have such a body of French Roman Catholics, without test or regular allegiance, at the disposal of the regular government ; to him their opinions, in respect to religion, were, he owned, of no very great importance. Let it be recollected, however, that if, in this age of liberality and religious tolerance, it was not deemed unsafe to entertain in the kingdom an army of possibly 30,000 Roman Catholic foreigners ; what an insult did we offer to the Roman Catholics of England, in continuing those oppressive and degrading restrictions, notwithstanding which they eminently distinguished their loyalty, and manifested the most dutiful spirit of allegiance ! If this bill should pass, he should think it his duty to bring, without loss of time, the situation of that meritorious class of subjects, the English Roman Catholics, as well as all the other dissenters, under the review of parliament, of which he was desirous that what he then said should be considered a sufficient notice ; and the object of his motion would be, that all tests, on account of religious opinions should be abolished. He knew that in making propositions of that kind, it was in general thought necessary to have some previous consultation with His Majesty's ministers, and some un-

derstanding with the people themselves. However, he should proceed without consulting either of them, relying on the propriety and manifest justice of the measure. Mr. Sheridan concluded with saying, that he should oppose the second reading; in which, if he was unsuccessful, he should propose some emendatory clauses in the committee.

The house divided ; for the motion 105 ; against it 30.

APRIL 14.

ROYALTY THEATRE.

Mr. Mainwaring moved, " That leave be given to bring in a bill to enable His Majesty to license, as a play-house during the summer season, the theatre called the Royalty Theatre."

Mr. SHERIDAN observed, that this application was only a renewal of what had been made a few years ago, which the house then, on full consideration, thought proper to reject. A number of persons on that occasion had thought proper, without any direct authority, to open a theatre near Well-close-square, affecting to do so under the power of Lord Cornwallis, a constable of the Tower; when, in fact, they neither had, nor could have, any such authority. They were admonished upon the subject and told they could not proceed under the authority of any law. The proprietors of the winter theatres, knowing that if this was suffered, their property might be materially injured by similar conduct in other places, took measures which the law gave to stop this proceeding; they were resisted by the gentlemen of this theatre, until the expense of the prosecution amounted to 2,800*l.* Now, he wished to submit to the house, whether any reason was given for allowing this attack on the property of the winter theatres to be renewed. He confessed he saw none that could bear upon the subject fairly, unless the house were prepared to say, that the mo-

monopoly of the patents should exist no longer, and that the theatres, like any other property where there was no patent to protect it, should be left to the rivalry of individuals. Perhaps some gentlemen might be disposed to treat with levity a subject of this nature as matter of mere amusement; but it might not be amiss to observe by the way, that 100,000*l.* were given for the patent of one of the winter theatres, and that 100,000*l.* more had been laid out in fitting it up for the entertainment of the public; and then perhaps the question of property might deserve a little more serious consideration. He then gave a short account of the proceedings of the gentlemen concerned in the establishment of the Royalty Theatre, and the course they took in resisting the known law. The claim of the present petitioners was rested on rather a curious foundation, because they had, contrary to express laws, built a theatre, which was shut up by the judgment of a court of law; and now come to parliament for a bill to legalise their act. It would be somewhat extraordinary if there was a law which said that there should be but two canals in the kingdom, and certain persons should, in the face of this law, cut a third, and then come to parliament for an act to make their conduct legal. He thought that it would be a very great hardship, after the proprietors of the theatres royal had gone to an enormous and incredible expense, under the sanction of law, and reliance on particular acts of parliament, if any persons might innovate upon that property.

APRIL 16.

ROMAN CATHOLICS AND DISSENTERS.

Mr. SHERIDAN gave notice that he should, on the first open day after the holidays, move for leave to bring in a bill to put the Roman Catholics and Dissenters of this country, at least, on a footing, as

to tests, with the foreigners about to be employed in the service of this country in the present war; and he really wished, he said, that ministers would take this into their most serious consideration, and hoped there would not be a dissenting voice to that proposition.

**BILL TO ENABLE SUBJECTS OF FRANCE TO
ENLIST AS SOLDIERS.**

Mr. Sheridan proposed an amendment, that, instead of the bill being in force during the present war, it should continue only for one year. He observed that His Majesty had no power to continue in his service his own subjects longer than one year, and that this was always under the provision of the mutiny bill. He saw no reason whatever; on the contrary he saw much danger, that the power of the crown should be more extensive with regard to the employment of foreigners in the British service. The object of the war was now defined by ministers to be that of the destruction of the present form of government in France, and the establishment of order, morality, and religion in that country. It might, perhaps, be discovered that we should not be able to effect that, without employing 500,000 men, and by this bill the number was indefinite. He would then ask, whether any vote of credit that house ever gave to the crown was so extensive as this? He would ask gentlemen what answer they had to give to their constituents if they should demand to know how the power of the purse of this country stood? Were they not bound to confess that the whole of it was entirely given up to the discretion of the executive power? and although the bill was silent as to the half-pay of all those who should act under this bill, yet it might turn out in the event, that notwithstanding they had no claim upon this country according to the letter of the act; yet, like the American loyalists, they might have an irresistible claim on our magnanimity, generosity, and

even our justice. Besides, after we had succeeded (which, by the way, might be many years hence) in the glorious cause of establishing a government in France, the contest might be changed into a squabble for indemnification, and an attempt to partition France, in which persons acting under this bill could not possibly assist. He urged many other arguments in favor of his amendment; the great object of which was to keep in the hands of that house, what they always ought to have for the benefit of the people, the power of the public purse.

The Solicitor-General said, that the reason of making the mutiny bill annual, appeared to be, because it was thought unfit to trust the articles of war made, or that might be made by His Majesty, for the government of troops within the kingdom, longer than a year; but this did not apply to troops that were to be employed abroad.

Mr. Sheridan said, the mutiny bill for the King's troops in India was annual. It was only for the Company's troops that it was permanent. The volunteer corps proposed to be raised for the internal defence of the country, were as much under the annual mutiny bill as the regular troops; and if it should be suffered to expire, they might be very respectable looking gentlemen in red coats, but they would be no longer soldiers.

The house divided on the amendment, ayes 29; noes 128.

Mr. Sheridan proposed a clause to limit the number of persons enlisted under the act, which shall, on any pretence, be within the kingdom at any one time, to 5000.

This was adopted.

APRIL 17.

**BILL TO ENABLE SUBJECTS OF FRANCE TO
ENLIST AS SOLDIERS.**

This was a third time, and the question put "That the bill do pass."—A debate ensued, in which Mr. Burke took a very considerable share.

Mr. SHERIDAN said, that there was one circumstance, and one assertion, in which he believed he should be joined by the majority of the house, which was, that the disqualifying sentence passed by the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Burke) upon himself, was altogether unfounded; for he never heard the honorable gentleman display more talents, more variety, or more eloquence, than on the present occasion; and he shewed by no means any appearance of declining faculties or powers in the wane, except when the right honorable gentleman found it convenient, for the sake of argument, to lose his memory. But though confessing his splendid talents, he could not grant to the right honorable gentleman one quality which he assumed to himself, that of being a plain matter of fact man; for he certainly had never heard a more varied fancy, or splendid imagination displayed, or greater arts exercised to inflame the mind or mislead the reason. Humanity had been very much dwelt upon by the right honorable gentleman, and, was he not convinced to the contrary, he should consider him as displaying an instance of the total want of it, from the levity with which he spoke at all times when any opportunity occurred, of the murders, massacres, and guillotines of a neighbouring country. He could not this night say it was a smile of indignation, for through the whole of his speech, he was full of his jokes upon those serious and calamitous subjects. But as to the enormities committed by the people of France, and which he by no means was desirous to palliate, he only wished to enquire how far these are to be attributed to the people themselves, and how far to the ancient form of their government. The right honorable gentleman has said, that it was a strong presumption against any government, when the generality of mankind rise in arms against them; this position may be true; but it is also a strong presumption against any form of government that chances to be subverted by any

sudden revolution, when the people of that government are found, as soon as their bands are broken, committing every species of violence and enormity, that the government itself was a bad one ; for whatever vice, whatever enormities are committed by this people, they could not have acquired from the sudden change of government, but have attained them under that government where their principles must have been formed. If they were prone to deprive others of their property, it was because they were accustomed to see the life of man made light of, and the human form disregarded. The right honorable gentleman talks of the security under the ancient government of France, when every man enjoyed himself in peace under his own vine, and beneath his own fig-tree ; surely the honorable gentleman cannot be serious in the assertion ;—he must have lost all remembrance of what the ancient government of France was. He is also lavish in his praises of their courts of justice, which were notorious for their misconduct and perversion of right. Their clergy, at least the higher orders of them, were professed Atheists and Deists ; and there was not a single man in the whole country who affected any knowledge of the world, or pretended to common sense, that would not consider the opinion of the right honorable gentleman, with regard to their religion, an insult to their understanding, rather than a compliment to their virtue ;—hence sprung those atheistical principles,—this want of every virtue of which we complain. The right honorable gentleman has said that they were wild beasts before we attacked them, and that it was on account of their being so, that it was found expedient and necessary so to do. He wished to know, if previous to the attack of the two most considerable of the combined powers, Prussia and Austria, they were the wild beasts the right honorable gentleman had described ? If so, why did not we then attack them ? Why rather boast of our partiality towards them, and express a

wish to conciliate their friendship, and court their alliance, [Here a cry of "No! No!"] at least it must be granted that we endeavored to conciliate them so far as to preserve peace with them; and were, on every occasion, boastful of our observance of neutrality.

The right honorable gentleman also expressed a wish for a powerful army to break through the crust of the iron frontier of that country, and to make the French emigrants the point of that wedge; to be sure it was putting those gentlemen in the most dangerous post; but he had no doubt that their high sense of honor would make them anxious to fill it. But are we certain of success from this measure, supposing we could even raise an army of two or three hundred thousand men? For, notwithstanding the idea of the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Dundas), that if he could once muster such an army, it would maintain itself; he believed it would not be found so easy a matter to effect it; for probably it would but induce the people to rise in large bodies, and form a more considerable mass to oppose this formidable army; and it is a well-known fact, that in La Vandee there was at one period, 200,000 men in actual rebellion—but even that number, formidable as it was, the convention found means to suppress. He wished to call to the right honorable gentleman's recollection, though he was convinced his memory was wholly unimpaired, except when forgetfulness might be attended with convenience, that in the case of America, this idea was held forth to the public,—that the majority of the people there were really averse to the ruling power, and that they wanted nothing but encouragement to induce them to declare themselves; but this proved a vain and delusive hope, and such would be the event of the present measure held out to the public. The little monosyllable (*yes*) which the right honorable gentleman affected to treat with so much levity, and upon which he unnecessarily

displayed so much wit and humor, went to convey an approbation of a system of retaliation which was not a proper subject of mirth. But after all the right honorable member has been pleased to advance on the subject, it is impossible to say whether that system is to be adopted ; and it is but right, not for the information of an individual merely, but for those persons to be employed under this bill, that it should be known. A certain noble Lord (Mulgrave), high in the service of His Majesty, and as he supposed, enjoying the confidence of His Majesty's ministers, had declared, that, in his opinion, the system of retaliation was to be adopted ; and he supposed he did not say this without the approbation of those with whom he acted ; but, at the same time, he wished for an explicit declaration upon the subject. The savage nature of the French, their unexampled ferocity, had been expatiated upon much at large ; but, he believed, with regard to their treatment of their prisoners, they acted on humane and honorable principles ; he wished to know from the noble lord if the fact was so or not. (*His Lordship nodded assent.*) The right honorable gentleman had quoted a variety of precedents concerning the doctrine of retaliation as to its practice ; and in each of these precedents, excepting with regard to America, he had completely failed. The first is the conduct of the English as respected the Irish regiments in the French service in the year 1745,—a space of nearly 60 years, when they took some of them prisoners ; but it was not very probable that many of those who left Ireland in 1681, returned to invade England in 1745 ; but even in this he makes an exception with respect to some who were engaged in a plan to subvert the government of this country, who were punished ; which will be exactly the situation of the persons to be employed under the present bill. The next precedent was the conduct of the French to Lord Ligonier, when taken prisoner, who was one of the

French refugees banished from France by the revocation of the Edict of Nantz (which was in itself one of the most cruel and barbarous actions that ever disgraced history), in the year 1692, and he was taken prisoner in the year 1747, a period of 65 years; so that the probability is, that it was the father of his lordship who was a refugee, or at least that his lordship must have been but a child in arms at the time. But what was the object of this war,—to subvert the existing government of France, or to destroy the ruling powers there; and, therefore, it is possible that such of the subjects of France as are taken in arms for this purpose, will be treated as rebels. That frantic, furious, and murderous disposition which the French have discovered, was not shewn, says the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Burke) by Louis XIV., when all Europe united against him; nor by the Venetians when the League of Cambray was formed; for this plain and obvious reason, there was no intention to destroy Louis XIV. or his government, or to subvert the established form of government of Venice; but, in the present case, our avowed object is the subversion of the existing power of France, and those who bear rule there. In the early part of his speech, the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Burke) treated with much levity and ridicule, the humanity professed by my right honorable friend towards the emigrants. We afford compassion,—we sympathise with them,—but will not do any thing to restore them. The application of the principle of humanity to them is this, not to hold out to them a promise of protection, which we may not afterwards be able to afford them. He called to the mind of the right honorable gentleman, the protection promised to the people of La Vânde, but which was never yielded. He desired him to recollect the promised protection of the Toulonese, whom we afterwards proved unequal to protect. He wished also, if necessary, to refreshen the memory of the right honorable gentleman (Mr.

Burke) on the subject of holding out protection to the American loyalists; a principle against which the right honorable gentleman himself wrote, and spoke with infinite ability, and predicted what would be the consequence of such proffered protection; anticipations which were afterwards completely verified. Another right honorable member (Mr. Dundas) had said, that the question he found most difficult to answer on this subject was, why the measure was not adopted before? The reason was, that the object of the war was not what it now is, the subversion of the French government. Or, perhaps, the right honorable gentleman might think it a more convenient season when the insurgents in La Vendee are suppressed, and that the French will have a stronger reliance on, and hope of security from, our promised protection, in consequence of having witnessed our faith to the Toulonese. That right honorable gentleman, speaking of the mildness of our laws, asks which is the greater crime, stealing a cheese out of a window, which an unfortunate man may do, either from wretched propensity, or from the pressure of necessity; or that of endeavoring to excite sedition, and infuse discontent among His Majesty's subjects? In this case the right honorable gentleman has done what he is often much disposed to do; he assumes as a ground what is not fact, and reasons upon it afterwards. The persons to whom he alludes, so far from being guilty, or convicted of the crimes which he imputes to them, have not even been charged with any such offence. With regard to the present bill, he contended, that if it was passed in the form in which it then was, that the house of commons would no longer have existence as a house of commons, because they would abandon those two great principles upon which their authority depends,—the power of a check upon the crown, by having an annual opportunity of disbanding the army; and the guardianship of the public purse; that then they

might have reason to console themselves when they returned to their constituents, and stated, that they had resigned those great privileges of which they had been appointed the guardians. He shewed that under the unlimited authority, both as to the expense that may be incurred, and the number of troops which may be employed, the King, if he chose, might not call a parliament in the next year ; but this, he was sure, would be thought an extreme case, when gentlemen called to mind the virtues, integrity, and regard for the constitution, which His Majesty's present advisers were known to possess. He earnestly besought the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Pitt) to consent to limit the duration of the bill to one year, as it could by no means impede the success of his object.

The bill passed without a division.

APRIL 29.

PRUSSIAN SUBSIDY.

On the 28th of April the following message from the King was delivered to the house—" His Majesty has ordered copies of a treaty, which has been signed at the Hague, by the Plenipotentiaries of His Majesty and the States-General of the United Provinces on the one part, and by the Plenipotentiary of the King of Prussia on the other part ; and likewise of a convention agreed upon between the respective Plenipotentiaries of His Majesty and the States-General, to be laid before the house : and His Majesty, relying on the zealous and affectionate support of his faithful commons, in the vigorous prosecution of the war in which he was engaged, recommends it to this house to consider of making provision towards enabling His Majesty to fulfil the engagements which His Majesty has entered into, as well as to defray any extraordinary expenses which may be incurred for the service of the present year, and to take such measures as the exigency of affairs may require."

On the 29th Mr. Curwen moved, " That the house should be called over to consider this subject this day fortnight."

Mr. SHERIDAN said, it was not his intention to trouble the house much at length on the present subject. If it was possible that the gentlemen on

the other side would suffer the question to be put without explaining any cause of their dissent, or upon what grounds they so far disapproved of the present motion, as to think a call of the house unnecessary, he did suppose that it was not their intention to oppose it, but that they meant to conform to the old proverb, "silence gives consent;" but if that was not the case, he trusted that they would indulge the house, by stating the reasons upon which they objected to the motion.

Mr. Whitbread addressed the house with great warmth; and observed, it was impossible to withstand the torrent on the other side of the house, and that Mr. Pitt had the command of it.

Mr. Sheridan rose—"Spoke! spoke!" was repeated from several parts of the house] He observed, that what he had already said could hardly be called a speech, it was only a hint at the candour of the minister; besides, gentlemen might as well tolerate a few observations upon that, as they were determined to remain silent on the other side. As to the allusion of his honorable friend to the influence of the minister in that house, it was certainly very unparliamentary; he was glad he explained it, for it was not true—we all knew the minister had no influence whatever on the majority of the house, except such as he honorably derived from his eloquence and fair argument. But his powers were not confined to the utterance of words merely, he had a dumb as well as oral eloquence, of which he had given a capital specimen to-night, for he had convinced them all at once by his silence; it was but just putting it in motion, and instantly all his friends became affected by the charm, and they all nodded dumb dissent to the motion like himself. This certainly carries with it some ground of suspicion; and what has fallen unintentionally from my honorable friend, is not wholly unfounded. (Here a cry of order.) But was the minister quite sure that some might not misunderstand him? Perhaps

they might understand his conduct according to the proverb, "silence gives consent," and under that idea, vote for the motion. These dumb votes might bring him into a dilemma, especially as he had yesterday desired that this motion should not be made, but should be deferred to this day. It was known how long and how well the right honorable gentleman could declaim, he begged pardon, argue, on any topic, without the least time to consider of his subject; but it was odd he should have required so much time to prepare himself for holding his tongue.

Sir George Young said, that when he called order, he did not allude to any thing that the honorable member had said; but in consequence of a noise in the gallery.

Mr. Sheridan begged the honorable baronet to remember, that he could not see or hear any person in the gallery; that it was empty, and no strangers could be there; and he was very happy that none of his constituents were present to observe the disgraceful conduct of the house that night, and that it was not, therefore, likely to be published to the world; as for his part, he should make it his study to prevent the shameful secret from transpiring, as far as was in his power. By the treaty (he observed) the object of the war was entirely changed: the King of Prussia, who, as had been stated by an honorable member, was engaged in a purely defensive war, no longer remained a principal in the war; he now merely hired some troops, and furnished others, in conformity with the terms of subsisting treaties between him and this country and Holland. We now avow ourselves engaged for the re-establishment of the monarchy of France; and the whole object being changed, he felt himself at liberty to withdraw his promised support, and had no difficulty in saying that he should refuse it, except in the case of invasion, or such circumstance as called upon every man to stand forward in the defence of

his country. He repeated what he said at a former period, that any minister ought to be impeached, and lose his head, who spilled the blood of his countrymen, or expended the treasure of the nation, to restore the ancient despotism of France. He observed, that we were likely to have a new tie upon us for continuing on the war, as he understood from pretty good authority, that there was at this time a large loan negotiating for the Emperor, in this country. With regard to the present treaty, he reverted to the attention the ministers of Holland paid their countrymen; they absolutely refused to pledge them for more than a single year; whilst our ministers, on the other hand, have consented, on the part of England, to the payment of 1,800,000*l.* annually during the war, 400,000*l.* of which we were to get from the Dutch as well as we could. They have not felt it incumbent on them to pay any respect to the commons of Great Britain, or to the wishes of their country; but have wantonly pledged us to pay a large sum of money, the whole of which will probably fall on us after the expiration of the first year. It was neither policy nor wisdom in the right honorable gentleman, to treat with so much inattention the commons, and by that means to render them insignificant in the eyes of the people, especially as he opposed every proposition made for a reform in the representation, and denied its necessity. The whole of his conduct, during the present session, had gone to render the representation contemptible, and on no occasion more than the present. He warned him of the bad consequence and impolicy of refusing discussion and explanation, when called for, both by the importance, the magnitude, and consequences of any subject. He was afraid the public would be incensed at these proceedings. He was afraid that these attempts of the minister to set aside all the deliberation of the house of commons, and to prevent them, by these hasty steps, from meeting, as they ought to do, in

the character of representatives of the people, would induce the people to meet themselves to discuss these things, and determine on them; and he thought they had a right so to do.

The house divided ; ayes 19 ; noes 98.

Mr. Sheridan said, after what had passed on this subject, no person could rationally entertain any sanguine hopes that any opposition to this measure would be attended with proper effect; perhaps, the granting of a few millions of money of the people of this country, did not appear to that house to be of importance enough to make it worth their while to pay any attention to it. He should have contented himself with giving to this resolution, in its present form, his simple negative, if it had not been for a very alarming rumour of an unfortunate event abroad, of which he feared ministers had intelligence, and which he feared was too true; he meant the total defeat of General Clairfayt, together with the entire loss of his whole camp, baggage, and stores, and of the taking of Courtray. Every person must feel the most sincere regret at such intelligence, and the general impression of that circumstance must add to the desire the house had to provide for the safety of this country, and for strengthening the power of the hands of government. But he saw the subject now under consideration of the house in so particular a point of view, from the peculiar situation of the country, that this unfortunate intelligence increased his objection to the measure. It would be wiser in us to claim of the King of Prussia his fulfilment of the treaty of 1788, and employ the residue of the money, now about to be voted, to some other purpose; for, considering the great difficulties we were now under, he had no objection to the two millions and a half, but he objected to this application of the sum; and he must say, it appeared to him, of all the topics which the Chancellor of the Exchequer had ever chosen

for panegyric, none was more unsuitable than the good terms of this bargain with the King of Prussia; for it struck him to be the most prodigally extravagant agreement he ever heard of. Had we called on the King of Prussia, and he fulfilled the treaty of 1788, we should have had of Prussian troops for a whole year 30,000, for 600,000*l.* of which we were to defray four, and the Dutch two hundred thousand. The question of economy, therefore, the minister could not adduce to his own advantage, in discussing this bargain with the King of Prussia. The minister had, on a former day, compared this with other subsidiary treaties, and with the expense of Hessian and other troops; he should have compared it with our last treaty with the King of Sardinia, and then we should see the point of economy a little more distinctly. He wanted to know in what light to consider the present situation of the King of Prussia. Was he merely a hirer of his troops (as many other Monarchs were on other occasions) in this war? Or was he a party for himself, as principal in this cause?—By the treaty between us and the King of Sardinia, there were to be employed in the common cause, for one year, 50,000 men, for which we were to pay 200,000*l.* and now we were to have of the King of Prussia only 30,000 men, for one year, for 1,600,000*l.* The house would by this see the bargain with regard to the question of economy: Another thing was to be considered; he wished to ask whether the King of Prussia had the 62,000 men now completely equipped; if he had not, and we were to wait until he had them, then his stipulation was a gross imposition upon us, and we might advance our money for nothing. If, on the other hand, he had them ready, it was a gross imposition to call for our assistance, by way of subsidy, for that which he could produce without it; for it was calling, in fact, on us to assist him to complete what was complete already. In the view he had taken

of this subject, the house would see we might avoid the great expense of this treaty, by calling on the King of Prussia to furnish us with 30,000 men for a year, according to the treaty of 1788, and for which we were bound to pay him no more than 400,000*l.* and then we might apply the remaining sum of money, which was little less than 1,600,000*l.* in another and a better way; for he must say fairly and openly at once, we could not prudently, after what we had witnessed, place any confidence whatever in the promises or engagements of the King of Prussia; he meant to say nothing of that prince personally; in what he said, he alluded only to the court of Berlin;—he did not mean to dwell on the conduct of that court to Poland; it was too notorious to require a comment; but he must call on the house to recollect, that at this moment, only ten short months had passed, since other powers had entered into a convention with us, not to lay down arms until every place taken by the French, had been given up. This was known by the King of Prussia, and yet he lays down his arms in 1794, in open violation of all faith, and the true spirit of treaty. Was there, therefore, any reason to put any faith in the pledge of such a court? For his part, he saw not the least prudence in putting the smallest faith in such pledge, or advancing a single British guinea on the confidence of it.

With regard to the treaty itself, he could see in it nothing to give more confidence than ought to have been given to the other engagements. He saw very crafty provisions in it for the King of Prussia. Mr. Pitt said, the army of the King of Prussia was to act in concert with others for the common cause; but had not the King of Prussia the command of them all, and might he not, from that very power, defeat the very end which we might have in view, by this treaty? Here Mr. Sheridan read some of the articles of the treaty, to shew the great care

which the King had taken of our interest; and then he asked what was the object of the King of Prussia in the manner he was acting? As he had the command of these 62,000 men, he had too much reason to apprehend that the King of Prussia would not act in any co-operation with Austria. He should be glad to know what power we had over the destination of these troops. If there should be any disagreement of opinion among the combined powers, how was that difference to be settled? He saw no provision made, that the majority should decide it; all the discretion, as to the Prussian troops, was left to the King of Prussia alone. Suppose we were to take any towns, Dunkirk for instance, and we wanted troops to garrison it; could we compel the King of Prussia to detach a part of his troops for that purpose? He saw no provision whatever of that nature; every thing was left to the discretion of the King of Prussia. Another thing to be considered was, that we were to pay the King of Prussia 600,000*l.* before he moves his army; though our minister trusted him so implicitly, he took care for his part not to trust any body. Now, after 600,000*l.* was paid to the King of Prussia, what security had we that he would move one man of them? After receiving the money, he might see some disturbance in his own dominions, or in the neighbourhood—in Poland, perhaps, which might be more to his interest to attend to, than attending to any subsidiary affairs for us. Thinking this bargain, was extravagant—that no faith could be placed in the engagements of the court of Berlin—knowing we had a right to call on the King of Prussia, if disposed to trust him at all, to fulfil the engagement of the treaty of 1788, by which we might have 30,000 Prussian troops for a year, for 400,000*l.* and believing the remainder of this vote could be better applied, he should move that all that part of the resolution which related to fulfilling the engagement with the King of Prussia be left out, so

that the resolution would be confined merely to a vote of credit for two millions and a half.

The house divided—for the amendment 32; against it 82.

MAY 5.

ABERDEEN BILL.

Mr. SHERIDAN rose, and stated, that among the orders of the day, one stood for taking into consideration the report of the Aberdeen bill; and also notice of a motion for discharging the order for the petitioners against that bill being heard by Counsel. The house very well knew that this bill was opposed by 2,700 petitioners, many of them people of great property and respectability, who would be ready to support a bill upon proper principles, if it were at all necessary. So it happened, however, that the corporation, or town council, had in their management sufficient funds for paving, lighting, and supplying with water the town of Aberdeen. The petition on the table so stated the case, and evidence was ready to be produced in support of it. Notice, however, had been repeatedly given, that a motion would be made to discharge the order for hearing the petitioners by counsel at the bar: this to him appeared very extraordinary indeed, and what he could hardly suppose was meant seriously. It might so happen, however, that those who were anxious to support the bill, with a view to push it through, might seize an opportunity in the absence of those members who wished to aid the petitioners in opposing a very improper measure, and the house, taken by surprise, might discharge the order. Where the interests of so many thousands were concerned, he should think this a very hard case. It now must appear very certain to the gentlemen who supported the bill, that it was impossible to carry it through in this late period of the session. The

people of Aberdeen were undoubtedly the best judges of their own affairs; the business might be safely trusted to the operation of their own judgment and good sense. Counsel had repeatedly attended, but it so happened that there was no house to hear them: the remaining part of the session might be spent in the same unprofitable (and, to the petitioners, very expensive) mode of procedure. He would, therefore, move, that the order for the taking this business into consideration should be put off to this day three months.

Mr. Wigley said, the inference appeared to him to be strange, that because the business was interesting to thousands, the hearing should, therefore, be delayed. He could not well conceive this mode of reasoning, and would, therefore, move an amendment, by leaving out the words "this day three months," and inserting "to-morrow."

Mr. Sheridan said, certainly the counsel might be called in and heard, but by whom? By the Speaker, and by one, two, or three members. It was well known, that at this advanced period of the session, such was the manner in which the hearing would be attended; but was it a manner befitting a subject in which the interest of many thousands were involved? Notice had three times been given of a motion to discharge the order for hearing the counsel—and for what reason? Had the counsel and witnesses failed to attend?—that would have been a good reason: but was it the fact? Certainly not; from day to day the counsel had attended; and why were they not heard?—because there was nobody to hear them. Because the judges were not in court, were suitors to be denied the benefit of being fully and fairly heard? It was for this very reason he had made the motion. If the good people of Aberdeen could not settle their differences at home—which this would give them an opportunity of doing, and he hoped it would so happen—then let them be heard at a time when gentlemen would attend, and give them a patient and full hearing:

he should, therefore, adhere to his motion, as being, in his opinion, proper and consistent.

The question was put, and there not being a sufficient number of members present to make a house, it was of course adjourned.

MAY 14.

PROCEEDINGS AGAINST MR. HASTINGS.

WESTMINSTER HALL.

*Mr. Sheridan's Reply to the Evidence and Arguments offered by the Counsel for Mr. Hastings, in Reply to the Begum Charge.**

Mr. SHERIDAN introduced his observations on what fell from the defendant's counsel with a short exordium, in which he stated, that he should compress what he had to offer within a very narrow compass indeed. He had read all the speeches made by the counsel with the most particular attention, and found it extremely difficult to discover even one point that went to set aside the evidence given by the managers respecting the Begum Charge, it not being in the power of counsel to controvert it.

He then alluded to the time consumed by those counsel in displaying their oratory; sometimes in the indulgence of a *sixteen hours'* oration of extraneous matter, with which they had loaded their arguments; and sometimes with figurative lamentations at the metaphors used by the managers. The first day had, he said, been occupied by the *learned* counsel in relating a very pleasant story of one Sadut. He went over the narrative, and, with such a ludicrous power as defied gravity, sketched the indignant emotions of two old men, whose beards had

* Vide pages 55—112, Vol. II.

mical as the house of commons was, he never could believe they would deny justice to the people of India, because justice could not be done to them without calling upon the people of England for a very heavy payment. For his own part, convinced as he was that on this article Mr. Hastings was guilty of having taken from the Begum a large sum of money for the public, on a charge of rebellion which was ill-founded; he was ready to avow, that it would be impossible to declare Mr. Hastings guilty, without giving to the Begum complete restitution of all which had been taken from her, principal and interest. It was stated to amount to two millions sterling.

The counsel had assumed that the Benares charge also was totally disproved; but they argued in the same manner, that if it was *not disproved*, the nation was bound to restore Cheyt Sing, to call him from his present miserable situation, whether in a Mahratta or a Mysore camp, to pay back to him the *millions* which had been brought into the exchequer by his expulsion, and to place him precisely in the state in which he stood when he was driven from Benares thirteen years ago. He would go farther—every person *injured* by the acts of Mr. Hastings had a right to full retribution, or there was no justice in the prosecution of the commons; but he hoped their lordships would not be deterred from their duty by such considerations. The commons were not prosecuting for personal purposes; No, it was to do *justice to India*, and to suppose that if it should appear the people of India were injured, this nation would merely stop at condemning the man who injured them, while the nation received the advantages arising from his injustice, was a libel upon the country.

Mr. Sheridan trusted that *Mammon* would never be the deity of that house, but to the temptation held out by the *learned* council, they would reply in the language of Sir Guyon, in the romance.

“ Mammon, said he, thy godhead’s vaunt is vain,
 And idle offers of thy golden fee;
 To them that covet such high-glutting game
 Proffer thy gifts, and fitter servants entertaine.
 Another bliss before mine eyes I place,
 Another happiness, another end :
 And to be lord of those that riches have,
 Than them to have myself, and be their servile slave.”

FAERY QU. b. 2. c. 7.

Here he stopped, saying, if he had treated the subject in any part of it rather lightly, it was because nothing which he had heard or read against him, deserved a serious answer. He was just to the merits of Mr. Dallas and Mr. Plumer, but said that vigor might be crippled into weakness by the cause it had to carry; and that there could be but little fame in the *Arena*, by throwing an antagonist who was forced to come on crutches.

MAY 16.

KING’S MESSAGE RESPECTING SEDITIOUS PRACTICES. SUSPENSION OF THE HABEAS CORPUS ACT.

On the 12th Mr. Dundas delivered the following message from His Majesty,—

GEORGE R.

His Majesty having received information, that the seditious practices which have been for some time carried on by certain societies in London, in correspondence with societies in different parts of the country have lately been pursued with increased activity and boldness, and have been avowedly directed to the object of assembling a pretended general convention of the people, in contempt and defiance of the authority of parliament, and on principles subversive of the existing laws and constitution, and directly tending to the introduction of that system of anarchy and confusion which has fatally prevailed in France, has given directions for seizing the books and papers of the said societies in London, which have been seized accordingly; and these books and papers, appearing to contain matter of the greatest importance to the public interest, His Majesty has given orders for laying them before the house of commons; and His Majesty recommends it to the house to consider the same, and to take such measures there upon as may appear to be necessary for effectuating

ally guarding against the further prosecution of those dangerous designs, and for preserving to His Majesty's subjects the enjoyment of the blessings derived to them by the constitution happily established in these kingdoms.

G. R.

On the following day Mr. Dundas brought up a sealed packet, containing the books and papers alluded to in the passage, and Mr. Pitt moved, "that an humble address be presented to His Majesty, to return him thanks for his most gracious message; to assure His Majesty, that the house will immediately take into its serious consideration the subject recommended to them by His Majesty; and to assure His Majesty, that they will adopt such steps as shall appear to them necessary in a matter so highly important to His Majesty's dominions."—This being carried, Mr. Pitt next moved, "that the papers be referred to a secret committee, consisting of twenty-one members, which was also carried."—On the 16th he brought up the report of the secret committee, and moved, "for leave to bring in a bill to empower His Majesty to secure and detain all such persons as shall be suspected of conspiring against his person and government."

Mr. SHERIDAN rose: he said he had waited with much attention and expectation to hear some argument used, finding the report so perfectly destitute of any grounds for such a measure; but at last saw that it was not the intention of the other side to bring forward any thing like a shadow of reason that could account for their conduct. This was a question, however, of such magnitude, that he should think it criminal to give a silent vote upon it. Before he proceeded farther, some notice was due to that extreme impatience for the question which the minister and his friends evinced, an impatience and a manner of expressing it, which he would not hesitate to say was completely indecent; yet, while liberty of speech, and liberty of parliamentary proceeding in that house remained, and he did not believe it could long remain if such a bill passed, he would never so far forget his duty to the country, as to allow it to pass in silence; however much it might be the wish of ministers to hurry the measure through the house, a measure which, to use the language of his learned friend, was one of the most daring, most abominable, and most unprecedented that had ever been offered to the consideration of a

British house of commons. He held the minister's attack upon the people of Great Britain to be unfounded, unjust, and impolitic, in the highest degree, by falsely telling to the French that the people of this country were so much disaffected and suspected, as to make the most harsh measures necessary to restrain their proceedings against the government. With regard to the report, which had been so well and so justly described by his honorable friends, he must say, that the moment it was produced, when once it came to the knowledge of the people, must appear to them to be a moment of joy and congratulation, and was so in reality. For after all the great exertions and great talents of this Committee of Public Safety, instigated as they were by the most tremendous alarms that had ever frightened any country, what had they to shew to the country as a vindication of their conduct, and the fruits of their alarms? What was to be found in the famous report of the British Barrere? Shortly this—a number of copies of idle papers that had been printed, published, and circulated, some of them for the last two years, and all of them before the commencement of the last session of parliament. Why, he would ask, had they not been prosecuted at the time they appeared? Why did not the Attorney-General prosecute upon the paper signed by Martin, which he thought, of all others, contained the most criminal matter? One thing, and only one, had been started that was any thing like new, and that was, that these societies had been providing arms; this by the way remained merely as an assertion, for no proof had been given to the house, even on that head; but if it really was so, or if any such treasonable practices existed in the country, were there not laws by which such guilty persons might be brought to adequate and condign punishment? He for one believed that no such practices existed in the country, and that ministers and their friends knew this to be the case; but it was necessary for

them and for their views, to keep us, or rather create some new panic to gain that continuance of power over the people, which seemed to be so much the object of their wishes. He believed most firmly that this measure was founded on a conviction on the minds of those who introduced and supported it, that no such practices existed at all in this country, that could produce any alarm that made this proposal necessary for putting the liberty and the property of all the people of Great Britain at the discretion of the Executive Government, a power which never had been, nor ought to be given, except in times of actual rebellion, or imminent and manifest danger, which none would be hardy enough to say was the case at present. It was somewhat singular, of all the great men who composed that committee, and he had a very great respect for the characters and abilities of many of them, none of whom had come forward in defence of this measure, or to state grounds for it, except the chairman. The principal argument which he had used, went to prove the illegality of conventions; but certainly he could not be serious in using such an argument; there had been many conventions in this country, Scotland, and Ireland, for different purposes, and none of them had ever been thought illegal. He had belonged to some, and he believed the right honorable gentleman had; he was sure the Duke of Richmond did; and though they were for the purpose of parliamentary reform, the avowed purpose of those societies, they held their conventions in the Guildhall of London, with the leave of the Lord Mayor of that city, with clerks and other attendants from the Mansion-house, at their command, and from thence they published their proceedings and resolutions. In Scotland, a convention had been held for a reform in the county elections, and a learned gentleman (the Lord Advocate) whom he hoped was in his place, presided at that meeting, and gave it the name of convention. In Ireland it was by a con-

vention that the Roman Catholics had obtained that which was denied them by using every other mode of proceeding. In none of those instances had conventions been thought illegal. With regard to the discretion of those who were to be entrusted with the extraordinary power, which a suspension of the habeas corpus act would put into the hands of the Executive Government, it had been said, that there was no danger of its being abused or perverted to improper purposes. On this point he differed widely, and had a right to refuse it, because having that day seen the frivolous pretexts upon which this bold and dangerous measure was founded, there was good reason to suppose that if they had the power to detain persons suspected, they would be very apt to proceed upon suspicions equally frivolous. Besides, as it had been very properly said, if they once get the power, there may be foul play, and men may be confined upon no other grounds than being hostile to the measures of administration; nor could any man in or out of that house be safe, if they were inclined to misrepresent or distress him. He was warranted in this argument by the calumnies that were daily circulated against him, and others, in newspapers, almost avowedly employed by ministers for such detestable purposes. Though he had been for many years peculiarly the object of calumny and misrepresentation in newspapers, they never had, or, he believed, ever should induce him to commence a prosecution against them; and this forbearance was in a great degree owing to the sincere attachment he had for the liberty of the press, and which he should be sorry, by any action of his, at any time, to endanger. It could not, however, escape his notice, that in one particular newspaper which was known to be under the influence, if not under the immediate direction, of administration, he was uniformly abused in the most gross and indecent manner. Even this very day he was accused of holding an improper communication

with a person outlawed by the laws of his country. Amongst the many prosecutions carried on to support the dignity of parliament, the right honorable the Attorney General should feel himself equally interested in vindicating the characters of its individual members, upon which so much depended in the public estimation. He would not directly charge the ministers with personally slandering him. He would not be so unmanly as to impute to any set of gentlemen the dark and groveling meanness of saying those things insidiously which they dared not mention to his face. If there were any lurking suspicion in the minds of any man, let them come forward and boldly avow them; where there is guilt, let the broad axe fall; public charges he was ready to meet, and confound any one who should presume to arraign him; for, in the whole of his conduct from the beginning of the French revolution, he thought himself entitled to some merit, instead of incurring any reproach. He then descanted on the application which the precedents adduced would bear to the present subject, and particularly distinguished the suspension of the habeas corpus during the American war, which was limited to persons coming from America, and not general as in the present case. He accused Mr. Burke of having so far concurred in the convention of the Irish Roman Catholics, that his son acted as one of their agents; he admitted him to have been very worthily employed; but the fact at least proved, that the hatred of conventions was not so unlimited as might otherwise be expected. He trusted that there would be abundant opportunities of discussing the principle of the bill in future stages; for, notwithstanding the abruptness and surprize with which it was brought in, ministers would, no doubt, reflect on the responsibility which would fall upon them on a future day; and though he was far from being a man of a sanguinary disposition, he should not be sorry to find that any minister who should

advice His Majesty to pass a bill of this magnitude, so hurried through the house, should lose his head upon the scaffold. He ridiculed the wonderful discoveries made by the new committee of Public Safety, and the opening speech of the minister, whom he called the British Barrere. He reprobated the whole of the minister's conduct on the present occasion, which was calculated to destroy the peace and harmony which subsisted amongst men. There could not surely be any real ground of apprehension, from a set of men without fortune or connection in the country; and who were, comparatively, few in number. But why not confine the operation of this bill to those societies? Why should the liberties of every British subject be surrendered to the crown, for the fault of a few? He would much rather he would make it treason or felony, for any society to meet for the purpose of obtaining a parliamentary reform, though he belonged to such a society, and would rather forfeit his life than abandon the cause.

Mr. Pitt said, he trusted, that the head of no member was in danger from such a conduct, as French tribunals were not as yet introduced into this country.

Mr. Sheridan said, that it was not for proposing the measure, but for the advice given to the sovereign, that the minister was responsible.

Mr. Burke observed, that without meaning, in the smallest degree, to dispute the magnanimity of Mr. Sheridan, in despising newspaper attacks, and never subjecting them to a prosecution, he could not easily believe that his provocations were not such as may be easily paralleled. A man so prominent upon the theatre of politics, and who possessed, as he unquestionably did, uncommon genius and activity, must naturally expect to be drawn before the scrutinizing tribunal of a newspaper; and he was very much deceived, if Mr. Sheridan, generally speaking, was not very mercifully dealt with. At least, he never knew a gentleman so much in the eye of the public, who had fared better with our diurnal censors. He thought it therefore, rather strange, that when he declined the invidious task of prosecuting himself those papers in which he was traduced, he should be so ready to confer that employment upon the Attorney-General. If his advice could have any weight, he would recommend to the learned

gentleman not to accept of the commission, lest he should draw upon himself that animadversion from which he attempted to free his neighbour.

Mr. Sheridan explained. He said, that he did not wish for the Attorney-General to interpose between him and any newspaper calumnies. He alluded to a charge made against him in a treasury paper, that he had been connected with a person now committed, (Mr. Stone) of which ministers were aware of the foulness and the falsehood.

The house divided on the motion for bringing in the Bill. Ayes 201; noes 39. The bill was then presented a first and second time, read, and after twelve divisions on amendments and motion made by the opposition, all of which were negatived by great majorities, it was reported, ordered to be engrossed and read a third time on the following day.

MAY 17.

SEDITIONOUS PRACTICES — SUSPENSION OF THE HABEAS CORPUS ACT.

Mr. SHERIDAN said, it was yesterday understood from the minister himself, that this business was to be brought forward, and precisely at four o'clock this day: he saw no reason why the house should wait for him, especially as he had been in the house, and had quitted it. Perhaps he was now taking a walk for his amusement, but that was not a reason for the house to wait; and as those who disapproved of the bill openly professed to wish for delay, for the purpose of affording to the public an opportunity of knowing the nature of this most alarming measure, he should, without any farther hesitation, move, "that this house do now adjourn."

Mr. Canning stated, that he understood Mr. Pitt had gone away on very partiular business, on which he might be detained for some time, and that he was obliged to attend to superior engagements.

Mr. Sheridan said, that the honorable gentleman who spoke last, was a very young member in that house, which was the best apology that he could

suggest for himself, to excuse the assertion which he had made. The business of this house acknowledges no superiority. It is in itself paramount to all. As to the particular occasion of this moment, the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Pitt) had founded all his argument on its transcendent importance and emergency.

The house divided ; for the adjournment 37 ; against it 161. The question was then put—" That this bill be now read a third time." Mr. Courtenay opposed it in a very long speech, in which he observed it had been alleged, that such is the moderation and humanity of administration, that this extraordinary power, the suspension of the Habeas Corpus act, may be safely entrusted to their discretion. Facts are the best criterion :—What degree of tenderness, what degree of humanity, did Messrs Palmer and Muir receive, in the execution of their sentence, from the ministers? Men of respectability and character,—gentlemen who had received as good an education as any in that house. He had undoubted and authentic information in his possession, of the indulgence and humanity of ministers with respect to these gentlemen. He would not have received it, he would not have credited it from public report ; the information he would give the house should be from the original letters, which he had copied himself. Mr. Palmer writes thus, from the Surprise, Portsmouth, March 8th :—

" By the particular orders of Mr. Dundas we were to be put among the other convicts, and no distinction made. It was only by earnest entreaties, and the proffered surety of the serjeant, that we are permitted to be in the same cabin with fourteen soldiers, going out to Botany Bay. Seventeen of us sleep in this hole; the grating of which is locked at night. The ship is so excessively crowded, that exercise is impossible."

Mr. Courtenay said, he only introduced this circumstance to shew what he might expect from ministers exercising a discretionary power. He did not invidiously mean to throw any imputation on the right honorable Secretary of State. In his private capacity he sincerely believed him both humane and generous. But in his official character, reasons of State, perhaps, might have induced him, contrary to his natural propensity, to execute the rigor of the Scotch law, against such seditious delinquents as Messrs. Muir and Palmer, who had daringly followed the example of the Chancellor of the Exchequer to bring about a parliamentary reform.

Mr. Dundas replied.

Mr. Sheridan defended Mr. Courtenay from having intended to make any charge against the honorable gentleman opposite him. He conceived that his honorable friend only meant, in his statement of

the circumstances relative to Mr. Muir and Palmer, to give the right honorable gentleman opposite him an opportunity of declaring whether they were true or not. He agreed with Mr. Grey, in complimenting the humane attention of Mr. Dundas, in every other respect, but that of applying to the fountain of mercy, to remit the sentences of these unfortunate men. It had been said, that no such application had been made; but on the contrary, when he had presented the petition from Mr. Palmer to that house, in which, it was true, he had rather claimed justice than mercy, he was instructed to state, that its lateness was occasioned by the petitioner's waiting the result of a memorial to the Queen, praying for mercy. The right honorable gentleman had not been quite so candid in stating that these men's heads were turned by some "Illustrious Visitants," as he was pleased to term them. For his part, he was not ashamed to own that he had been one of those visitants. He should rather have been ashamed, under all the circumstances, if he had not paid a visit to men, in his judgment, persecuted and oppressed. His advice to them was, however, to plead for mercy, and neither he nor his honorable friend had uttered a word for the purpose of strengthening their enthusiasm. The arguments, he proceeded to observe, what he had heard this night, were totally irrelevant to the question, unless it was to be stated, that a convention for the purpose of effecting a parliamentary reform, was an attempt little short of high treason. Of the nine precedents which the right honorable gentleman had mentioned, not one was similar to the present case. And if the constitution did survive these former suspensions, the present seemed to be a complete overthrow of the constitution; for it could not be shewn that it would survive the present instance. It was not at all wonderful, if after a revolution (such as in 1688), there should be many disaffected persons in the country; and that they should have af-

terwards broke out into open rebellion; and under such circumstances it was policy to put extraordinary powers in the hands of the Sovereign. The honorable gentleman had said, that he would rather meet an open enemy, or a rebellion, than the secret poison, the sculking measures which these Societies had propagated and carried on. But was it proved that any such thing did exist? No such thing. The Societies bear no such feature or character. And if they did, theirs was a very extraordinary conspiracy; for it was a conspiracy carried on in the presence of every body. It was an open, garrulous, and stalking conspiracy. The conspirators met in gardens, fields, and in public houses; they announced, and even aggravated their purposes.—Every document relative to their redoubted conspiracy had been published long before the Report of the Secret Committee! The measures now adopted were infinitely more likely to produce a real conspiracy; they did not go to declare a meeting for the purpose of promoting a parliamentary reform to be illegal; the same measures would of course be followed; but in a different manner. The remedy was not suited to the disease; it was not even stated as yet whether a convention for that purpose was criminal. The right honorable gentleman, Mr. Dundas, had censured the idea of universal suffrage as impracticable, but this was merely a matter of opinion. It was not yet asserted that the maintenance of this theory should be constructed into actual guilt. Would ministers propose to imprison and detain all those who entertained such an opinion? If so, it was a severity which must undoubtedly fail of its object. The ministers should be aware of this failure, from a review of their past conduct. They had evinced a jealousy of parliamentary reform ever since the first appearance of the French Revolution. But even from their own declarations it appeared that the result of their measures had been uniformly against their purpose. The

proclamation, which was their first measure, was avowedly more directed against the "Friends of the People" than against any of those seditious Societies. Yet that proclamation, it appeared, had begot nothing but tumult and insurrection. Their next measure was the spreading abroad an host of spies and informers. These had only served to increase the general turbulence. Their last measure was a severe system of prosecutions, and the result of these was, according to their own statement, "That a great part of the nation was now actually in a state of rebellion!" In his own conviction, however, none of those dangers had any actual existence. The Report of the Committee was merely a political artifice. That Committee was composed of men in part deceiving, and in part deceived. It was equally suspicious from its manner and its precipitancy. It went to surprise parliament into the strongest of all possible measures, from documents there adduced as novelties, but of which every man in and out of that house was previously in the possession. Ministers were long since in possession of every fact relative to these Societies. They had long since heard of their having had serjeants to drill them in back rooms; of their having been mustered at the Cat and Magpye, and the Black Dragon; and the only reason why they did not proceed on these informations was, that they knew they were all false. But on the committal of Mr. Stone all these fictions were revived; though if there were any plot, those two plots must be separate and distinct, as Mr. Stone most certainly had nothing to do with these Societies. The conclusion of the Report, which formed the only novelty in point of matter, stated, that arms had been distributed to some of those Societies. It was not stated whether those arms had been received from Sheffield, or whether each man, dreading the excesses of a church and King mob, had determined to provide

his house with a musquet. No evidence of this kind was furnished, and in fact it was an utter impossibility that such a distribution of arms, as was there suggested, could have been formed without the knowledge of ministers, and without their knowledge having been obtained, at a time long antecedent to the present period. The early industry of the press, he observed, had been exercised in an uncommon degree, to second the management which had distinguished the bringing forth of the Report. He held now an hand-bill, under the following curious title: "The downfall of Jacobinism, or the plot discovered; to which is added, the glorious successes of the Duke of York, being an extract from the late Extraordinary Gazettes." This curious combination, however absurd it may seem, was a proof of the diligence which had been employed to excite and spread the general alarm. But he would appeal to the members of that house, whether, under all these circumstances, they did not expect a full discovery of some serious and pressing danger? In the course of last year, they had been told, that the system of prosecutions, and the associations of Mr. Reeves, "which did him much immortal honour," had totally changed the public mind. In the King's speech, at the close of the last session of parliament, they were told that the attempts against the constitution were completely checked. On the opening of this session, His Majesty was again made to rejoice, that the "steady loyalty" of his subjects had defeated every such attempt. Since that time, the hands of government had been strengthened by the Alien bill, the Traitorous Correspondence bill, the new levies, &c. &c. yet the house was now called upon to declare, that His Majesty had been completely mistaken; that all those efforts had failed; and nothing would now be sufficient to preserve the existing government, unless it were to be invested with the undefined exercise of an arbitrary power! But it was asked

why the Opposition would not take the word of the Secret Committee, for the existing danger? He would answer, because it was not asked. The Report was made in such a way as to take from the committee and from the minister every share of responsibility. They had laid their proceedings before the house, and if the commons chose to act upon these, the ministers were not responsible.—Such a power, obtained in such a manner, he was not willing to sanction. It was asked on a light and frivolous pretence; there was, therefore, every reason to apprehend that it would be exercised on pretences equally frivolous. The sentiments of those societies he looked on as springing from the seeds first sown by Mr. Pitt, Mr. Burke, and the Duke of Richmond. It was ungenerous in them first to instil the principles, and afterwards to treat their proselytes with rigor. Such conduct could only tend to inflame the mind of the country, and to fill it with contempt for all public men. He then proceeded to prove, that these gentlemen were the authors of the present fermentation in favor of a parliamentary reform, by citing parallel passages from the papers called seditious on the table, and the letters of Mr. Burke to his constituents at Bristol; the Duke of Richmond's letters to Colonel Sharman, &c. He inferred that the former, though expressed in less elegant language, conveyed "no one leading idea, which was not obviously borrowed from the latter. He then made some comparisons between them, in order to shew the similarity between the new societies and former conventions. The seditious publications of 1794 say there will be an absolute despotism. Those of 1782 had said that liberty was in danger: "we lose the spirit of honest equality;" such were the words of a right honorable gentleman (Mr. Burke), whose sentiments were since changed. Another passage, in another resolution, spoke thus: "Wicked contrivances are made to separate us; let us unite with the people." The

society to which he belonged, the Friends of the People, and which in the present instance had been the object, though not of direct, yet of insinuated attack, had been uniformly consistent: they had set out with avowing that their object was a reform in the representation upon constitutional principles; and he defied any one to prove that they had deviated from it in any of their proceedings in the slightest degree. Mr. Sheridan proceeded to enquire, whether, if a convention was stated to be held for the purpose of parliamentary reform, the delegates were to be taken up, and imprisoned during His Majesty's pleasure? In that case, in his opinion, the only effect would be, that the jails would be filled with men whose criminalty was not defined, and at the same time, such measures could never accomplish their purpose. If this bill, therefore, was to be obtruded on the public, it would be wise in him and his friends never to set a foot in that house again. He had been asked on a former night, what loss would it be if his honorable friend (Mr. Grey) should put his threat in execution in leaving that house? he would answer, that it would be a great loss to the country; not only in losing a gentleman of such great talents, but it would tend to lessen the character of parliament in the public mind;—and to shew that such would be the case, he would relate the circumstance of a man who was asked to vote at the election for Westminster: “I would not vote,” said this man, “for Mr. Fox before, because he was then secretary of state; but I will give him my vote now, because I think he acts like an honest man.” Such were the opinions which people were apt to form of the opposition. And if the present bill was to be passed into a law, neither he nor his friends would deem it any longer prudent to attend that house.

The bill was read a third time and passed by very large majorities, after which Mr. Sheridan moved that the report of the secret committee should be printed, which was agreed to.

it purported to be a reply from Lord Dorchester, to the delegates of several Indian tribes, dated Quebec, February 10, 1794, from which reply it appeared, that his Lordship considered this country as on the eve of a war with America. Mr. Sheridan begged leave to read to the house two paragraphs from this reply, to shew, that supposing it to be an authentic paper, that his Lordship considered a war with America as inevitable, for that their conduct had almost exhausted the patience of this country. He observed, that it was not very probable that his Lordship would have ventured such an opinion without instructions from His Majesty's ministers; and, if they had sent him out instructions, he thought it somewhat extraordinary, that when he mentioned, in the course of some discussion this session, the defenceless state of Halifax, the right honorable Secretary of State should have said, that there was no danger to be apprehended in that quarter, if, at the same time, he was conscious of such instructions having been sent to Lord Dorchester. He concluded by moving, "That an humble address be presented to His Majesty, that he would order a copy of the instructions sent to Lord Dorchester to be laid before the house."

Mr. Dundas, in express terms, declared, that it was the first time he had heard of the speech of the noble Lord that the honorable gentleman had alluded to. In equally explicit terms, he disavowed having a knowledge of any orders being sent from this country that had the most remote tendency to create a rupture with America.—He entertained with the honorable gentleman the highest opinion of the prudence and discretion of Lord Dorchester, and was perfectly assured that the noble Lord would not do any thing rashly. In his opinion, the whole paper was a forgery. *

Mr. Sheridan said he was glad to hear ministers declare that the paper was not authentic; although, considering the effects it had produced, both in America and in this country, it might have become them to say so without being called upon. He hoped he understood the right honorable gentleman to say distinctly, that no instructions of a hostile nature had

been given with regard to America ; and that if the paper had been a forgery, of which he still entertained doubts, that ministers had the wisdom and discretion to avoid a new war. One thing made him still think that this paper was authentic, which was, that it corresponded with what the right honorable gentleman said with regard to the endeavor to conciliate a peace between the United States and the Indians. He wished to know if the right honorable gentleman knew exactly what the paper was : it imported to be a reply from Lord Dorchester to the delegates of certain Indian tribes. He then proceeded, and read the reply, as follows :

Children—*I have well considered your words, and am now prepared to reply.*

Children—*You have informed me, that you are deputed by the seven villages of Lower Canada, and by all the nations of the upper country, which sent deputies to the General Council, held at the Miamis, except the Chawanoos, Miamis, and Loups.*

Children—*You remind me of what passed at the Council Fire, held at Quebec, just before my last departure for England, when I promised to represent their situation and wishes to the King, their father, and expressed my hope that all the grievances they complained of, on the part of the United States, would soon be done away by a just and lasting peace.*

Children—*I remember all very well ; I remember that they pointed out to me the line of separation which they wished for between them and the United States, and with which they would be satisfied and make peace.*

Children—*I was in expectation of hearing from the people of the United States what was required by them : I hoped I should have been able to bring you together, and make you friends.*

Children—*I have waited long, and listened with great attention, but I have not heard one word from them.*

Children—*I flattered myself with the hope, that the line proposed in the year eighty-three, to separate us from the United States, which was immediately broken by themselves as soon as the peace was signed, would have been minded, or a new one drawn in an amicable manner : here also I have been disappointed.*

Children—*Since my return I find no appearance of a line remains ; and from the manner which the people of the States push on, and act, and talk on this side, and from what I learn of their conduct towards the sea, I shall not be surprised if we are at war with them in the course of the present year ; and if we are, a line must then be drawn by the warriors.*

Children—*You ask for a passport to go to New York ; a passport*

useless in peace ; it appears, therefore, that you expect we shall be at war with the States before you return. You shall have a passport, that, whether peace or war, you shall be well received by the King's warriors.

Children—They have destroyed their right of pre-emption, therefore, all their approaches towards us since that time, and all the purchases made by them, I consider as an infringement on the King's rights ; and when a line is drawn between us, be it peace or war, they must lose all their improvement of houses on our side of it. The people must all begone who do not obtain leave to become the King's subjects. What belongs to the Indians will of course be confirmed and secured to them.

Children—What further can I say to you ? You are our witness, on that our part we have acted in the most peaceable manner, and borne the language of the United States with patience, and I believe our patience is almost exhausted.

Given under my hand, at the Castle of St. Lewis, in the city of Quebec, on the 10th day of February, in the year of our Lord, 1794.

(Signed)

DORCHESTER.

By his Excellency's command,

(Signed)

HEMAN WISSIUS RYLAND, Sec.

Mr. Sheridan said, that though this paper carried with it the appearance of authenticity, and was believed to be authentic by many persons conversant with American affairs, yet, as it had been publicly disavowed, he would beg leave to withdraw his motion.

MR. SHERIDAN'S MOTION FOR ENABLING CATHOLICS TO HOLD MILITARY APPOINTMENTS.

Mr. Sheridan said, he rose to make a motion which he had often deferred at the request of ministers, in the hope that they had only to consider it, to give it their assent. The only possible objection to it that he could see was, that it came not from their own side of the house ; but it was in its nature no party question, and came forward under circumstances peculiarly favorable, from having arisen incidentally. At a time like the present, when His Majesty was calling for the aid of every description of his subjects to support the constitution,

it would, perhaps, be improper for the persons in whose behalf he spoke, to petition even for what they felt to be no more than justice, because their petition might seem like a demand; and it might also be improper for government to grant them voluntary relief, because that might look like a bribe. This was his opinion with respect to all the penal statutes that made distinctions between different classes of His Majesty's subjects; distinctions which every man must wish to see done away at one time or other, and which he should vote for abolishing at once, as often as a motion was made to that effect, but which he could not expect to see entirely done away at present. He was one of those who respected both the rights and the prejudices of the people, for he considered those prejudices as having been originally inspired and cherished by the government. When we were struggling for our constitution against a popish prince, supported by a party whose religious and political opinions were equally hostile to civil liberty, great pains had been taken to create in the minds of the people a dread and abhorrence of trusting Roman Catholics with any degree of power. When such prejudices had been instilled, and government had reaped the benefit of them, he held it unjust for government to turn round and insult those very prejudices which it had before applauded. Now, however, both the danger from Roman Catholics, and the prejudices against them, had vanished from every mind. The riots in 1680, had not arisen from any dread of the relief then granted to the Roman Catholics, but from discontent with the general system of measures, and the criminal neglect of those whose duty it was to prevent them. Besides, the progress of opinion in the last fourteen years had been great; and many thought that the people were now rather too inattentive to religious differences than too apt to mark them. If the danger and the prejudice were both gone, where could be the inconvenience of allowing Roman Ca-

tholics to serve in the army and navy like other
jects? When we were embodying an arm
French Catholics, it appeared preposterous to
clude English Catholics from serving their cou
in a military capacity; and this had suggest
him the present motion.

By the act passed last year in Ireland, Cath
were allowed to serve as officers in the army, u
a certain rank. Supposing any of those of
were to be ordered to England on duty, coul
thing be more absurd than their being subject to
heavy penalties here, for what they had do
strict conformity to law in their own country?
thing was so extravagant, that he was persuad
could not exist, but by an omission on the part o
nisters, in consequence of business that appear
them more urgent. When Mr. Hobart intro
the bill for the relief of the Irish Catholics, he
“that with respect to admission into the arm
navy, any change must depend upon Eng
that such a measure was in contemplation in
land, and a communication had been made up
subject.” In a debate in the house of lords
clause for enabling Catholics to accept of m
employments, Lord Farnham said, “that til
milar law was passed in England, Catholic o
could not attend their regiments, if ordered o
into England. He wished, therefore, that a C
lic should not be eligible to a military commiss
Ireland, until the principle should be adopt
England; and moved to reject the clause.”
Lord Chancellor said, “the clause went r
to enable Catholics to accept military employ
but it could not be supposed His Majesty wou
point men on such posts, until the laws of the
should fully qualify them to act in every par
It was more than probable that a similar law
would be adopted in England before the la
two months.”—Such were the declaration
in habits of official communication with Hi

jesty's ministers ; and therefore he was justified in supposing that what he was now to move, had been intended, and omitted only by accident. Catholics did not stand in the same situation in this respect with Protestant Dissenters. A Protestant Dissenter would not be refused leave to sit in the army, if he chose to run the risk of the penalties ; but a Catholic, under certain circumstances would. A Catholic gentleman of Surry, of most respectable and great influence in his neighbourhood, had been nominated lieutenant-colonel of a new corps, which he had principally contributed to raise, but ministers did not think proper to allow his commission to be signed. For this he did not blame them ; they only obeyed the intention of the law ; but was it fit that the law should so remain ? Supposing one of those commands usually filled by the senior officer to become vacant on the continent, if the officer next in order could prove himself a French Catholic, he would be entitled to succeed ; if he happened, unfortunately, to be an English or an Irish Catholic, he would be disqualified by law. He avoided going into the general question of test acts and disqualifying laws ; he wished to see them all erased from the statute books ; but he would not attempt more at once than was likely to be granted. He was not particular as to the mode of attaining the object ; it might be done by extending the time allowed for qualifying, or by framing a new oath, which Catholics could take, and which need only contain an acknowledgement of His Majesty's right to the throne, and a declaration of attachment to the constitution. He concluded with moving for leave to bring in a bill, and reading the form of the proposed oath—" I, A. B., do swear, that I will bear true allegiance to His Majesty, and defend his right to the crown, the laws and constitution of these kingdoms, and the succession to the throne, as by law established."

Mr. Dundas moved the previous question. Mr. M. Robinson said he should oppose the motion for the previous question ; because

he thought it admitted the propriety of the measure, but merely objected to the time it was brought forward; and it was a measure which he should oppose altogether, as pregnant with very dangerous consequences.

Mr. Sheridan said, he concurred in opinion with the honorable member (Mr. Robinson) on the previous question, that it admitted the propriety of the measure, but objected only to the season. He trusted, therefore, that ministers themselves would bring it forward in the next session. The services of the dissenters we were not deprived of as we were of those of the Roman Catholics, because the bill annually passed, allowing them farther time to qualify, operated as a check upon the disqualifying laws; but were it not for that bill, we should be deprived of the services of all the right honorable gentleman's countrymen, who were mostly of the *Kirk of Scotland*; General Dundas, and other very able Scotch officers; indeed all the Duncases in this country are dissenters; and were it not for the happy intervention of this bill, we should be deprived of their valuable services. He wished to know if any bad consequences had arisen from the indulgences granted to the Catholics in Ireland? Had any bad consequences arisen, or was any likely to arise, from the indulgence granted them here? He wished to know from the gentlemen of the long robe, if any mischief could arise by admitting them to the bar? He concluded by observing, that he would not divide the house, and trusted that ministers would, themselves, bring forward the subject early in the next session.

MAY 30.

**MR. FOX'S MOTION FOR PUTTING AN END TO
THE WAR WITH FRANCE.**

Mr. Fox having concluded a most eloquent address to the house, and read several resolutions, the first of which was moved. Mr. Jenkinson rose in reply, and moved the previous question.

Mr. SHERIDAN said, that the honorable gentleman (Mr. Jenkinson) who had just sat down, had spoken certainly with the tone of the right honorable Minister near him, (Mr. Pitt) though not with his ability : he had a right, however, to conclude from the silence kept by ministers, that the sentiments uttered by the honorable gentleman, allowing for his warmth and confidence of assertion, were to a great degree their sentiments. The honorable gentleman had on this, as on most occasions, expressed himself with a degree of confidence, which impressed his mind, as it always had done, with an idea, that though the honorable gentleman was not in the cabinet, yet he certainly appeared to be so much in the secrets of ministry as to be properly supposed to deliver their sentiments. No other supposition, indeed, could warrant the manner in which that honorable gentleman delivered his sentiments, unless we were to suppose that he had an hereditary knowledge of politics, and a deep insight into the secrets of cabinets ran in his blood. On the present occasion, he could not but conceive that he had passed the bounds (of the instructions he would not say) but of the intimations at least that had been given him by the right honorable gentlemen who were his supporters, and sat on each side of him (Mr. Pitt and Mr. Dundas) ; for he could not conceive, however their silence might justify the supposition, that they were prepared to accompany the honorable gentleman in all the lengths he had gone this night. Not to follow him through the greater part of his arguments, few of which were of much weight, or had the smallest tendency to refute those of his right honorable friend (Mr. Fox) ; he should confine himself to take some notice of one or two positions, which seemed to him to meet the question on a fair and manly ground. The honorable gentleman had openly and candidly stated, that the object of the war was the destruction of the jacobin government

consequently a fresh obligation upon us to exert the last remains of our strength in opposing them. This he took to be so clear, that he thought it was as certain as mathematical demonstration. Perhaps the honorable gentleman received all this as hereditary knowledge. The same language, he well remembered, was held at the time of the American war. It was then said, will you cede to these rebels? If you do, the spirit of revolt will stalk abroad at home; Ireland will be lost, and the crown itself may be unsafe. If ministers really did mean to avow this as their object, they had not even steadily pursued it; for the West-India expedition was a deviation; and every guinea, and every man employed to that purpose, was a grand defection from that great object, upon which depended, as we were told, the peace, happiness, religion, and good government of mankind. Lord Hood, who was now knocking his head against the walls of Bastia, was of very little service, if he were even successful in his present attempt with regard to the final object. We ought not to have endeavoured to pilfer an indemnity, without considering the interests of the allies who contended in a common cause. He was afraid that we could not reproach even our most faithless allies. If all cant and hypocrisy were laid aside, it would, perhaps, appear, that we had entered into this Swiss romance, this mercenary crusade, for no other purpose at first than to share the spoil of France; and afterwards we had graced our iniquity with calling this a war of religion. Mr. Sheridan next noticed some of the transactions of the late imperial loan, and the explanation Mr. Pitt had given upon that subject. This explanation was so curious, and tended to put in so strong a point of view the candor and open dealing of the right honorable gentleman, that he begged leave to read, for the information of the house, the correspondence that had passed on the subject, as given in a ministerial paper.

(COPY.)

Sir,

London, May 5, 1794.

When His Imperial Majesty's minister at this court, and the Treasurer-General of the Austrian Netherlands, proposed to my house the negociation of a loan for the Emperor, of three millions sterling; I made it a special condition, in undertaking the negociation, that nothing should be found in it contrary to the existing laws, or disagreeable to the government of this country; and when I had the honor of waiting upon you this morning, with the imperial ministers above mentioned, you effectually removed every possibility of doubt on that head, by declaring the negociation perfectly legal, by assuring me that government was pleased with its success.

For the satisfaction of the public, I beg you will have the goodness to repeat that assurance in writing.

I have the honor to be, &c.

WALTER BOYD.

The Right Hon. W. Pitt.

(COPY.)

Sir,

Downing-street, Saturday, May 17.

In answer to the letter which I have received from you on the subject of the loan of three millions to the Emperor, which it has been proposed to you to negotiate, I have the honor to acquaint you, that I am not aware of any law to prohibit a loan to a foreign state in amity with this country; and that in the present case, government by no means wish to object to a measure for the accommodation of His Imperial Majesty, with whom His Majesty is engaged in the closest union and concert.

I have the honor to be, &c.

(Signed)

W. PITT.

Walter Boyd, Esq. Albemarle-street.

After some remarks on these letters, Mr. Sheridan insisted, that if, in the course of another year, the Emperor could not raise a supply, he must also become an artificial power, and apply to this country for a subsidy. The Empress of Russia, he remarked, had also entered into a very solemn treaty, in which she had promised not to lay down her arms but by common consent: she had, however, hitherto unfortunately forgot to ask her own consent to take them up. So that of all our allies, one had done nothing; another had done all he could do, and the remaining burden of the war must rest upon our-

selves. Our allies the Dutch were far from pleased with our possession of the West-India islands, and he wished the prophecy of a person, who was supposed to possess the gift of a second sight, might not come true, viz. that his Majesty's ministers would shortly possess every island in the world except the island of Great Britain. The honorable gentleman had declaimed very much on the impracticability of making peace with the present government of France, and had held language which seemed to pledge this country to a continuance of the war to an unlimited period.—He and his right honorable friends should recollect, that similar language had been held in the calamitous war with America, and should learn from the example of that fatal contest to be more moderate in such assertions, as there certainly was still more in that war than in the present to justify any such unqualified asseverations. There was one consideration which had not been touched on by his right honorable friend who opened the question, which yet he thought deserving the attention of the house, as intimately connected with the subject, that was the state of the country at home. He could not but consider the war as giving rise to a very dangerous system of spreading alarm among the lower orders, to excite their passions against the supposed enemies of their country, in order to throw more power into the hands of administration, and to keep the public from too nicely examining some of the late dangerous proceedings. For this purpose, fabulous plots and forged conspiracies had been brought forward, originating solely in the foul imagination of His Majesty's ministers. He perhaps might be told, that from the report of the committee, the house had sufficient ground to give credit to the existence of such conspiracies. He for one, frankly avowed that he could form no such conclusion from the facts in that report, and he did not chuse so far to give up his understanding to any individuals, as to receive the conclusions of men whom he thought

deluded, and those conclusions appeared to him as not founded on any thing like proof. It might be said that the house were to expect another report ; if that report should bring matter sufficient forward to prove any traitorous designs in any men whatever, he would be among the first to vote for their exemplary punishment, and to retract and apologize for any thing he had now advanced ; this however, he was free to confess he did not believe would be the case. Here he could not help mentioning, what appeared to him contrary to the first principles of justice and honor. Many papers of the most inflammatory sort had been put into his hand, tending to irritate the public mind against the unfortunate men now in custody, which had been circulated through this metropolis, and over great part of the country. These he had little doubt he could trace, if not directly to the ministers, at least to their agents and persons in their pay. One question he would ask, did ministers mean to give these men a fair trial ? He confessed it appeared to him very suspicious. It looked very much like an attempt to irritate the mob so far as to render it dangerous to a jury to acquit these unfortunate persons. At any rate it was an unmanly, unfair, and unjust proceeding, thus to prejudice the people against persons whose innocence or guilt was not yet determined. He must advert also to the unfair methods which had got abroad into the world, of calumniating himself, and the persons who with him had opposed the conduct of administration. This he should not rely on much, but would put a case for the house to judge on, that they might determine whether or no they thought it decent to have one of their member's characters handled severely, contrary to what he must say was just. Suppose, said the honorable gentleman, a great magistrate of the city, robed in the ensigns of his office, not lightly over a glass of wine, or after a good dinner, but solemnly and gravely in the court with his brother aldermen, should declare that a

member of parliament, by name, Mr. Sheridan, would be sent to the Tower two months after his assertion, provided the *Habeas Corpus* act were repealed, and should back his assertion with a bet, and so considerable a bet as a hundred and twenty guineas to six. Would you think this a light or trivial matter? and would not you suppose that such a magistrate, from his known connexion with administration, had some authority for saying so beyond his own ideas as a private man. It would not be orderly to name the honorable magistrate, but if he be in the house, he probably may be known by a gold chain he wears. It was well the laws of England were not assimilated with the law of leasing-making, with the assistance of the Attorney-General, he should certainly have transported the first magistrate of the city of London to Botany Bay. [Here a cry of name.] No, said Mr. Sheridan, there is another reason. It is, a poet somewhere says,

“A name that sounds uncouth to British ears.”

Notwithstanding every such calumny, in defiance of any threats, and in despite of popular obloquy, he should still continue to do what he thought his duty, and would challenge one to point out any thing in his conduct which would justly subject him to such an imputation. He concluded with giving his hearty approbation of the original motion, as in his conception it tended to promote the true and permanent happiness of the people of Great Britain.

Mr. Pitt in reply said, “the honorable gentleman (Mr. Sheridan) thought proper, without the smallest regard either to probability or decency, to assert, that plots had been fabricated, and that these plots had no foundation except in the foul imagination of ministers. The abuse of that honorable gentleman has been too often repeated to have any degree of novelty with me, or be entitled to any degree of importance, either with myself, or any other of my honorable friends, who may occasionally happen to be its objects. But I must own, that there is some degree of novelty indeed in this mode of attack against a report originating from twenty-one members, to whose character for honor and integrity I will not do any injury by comparing it with the quarter from which the attack was made.

Mr. Courtenay called Mr. Pitt to order for having made an improper and uncalled-for attack on Mr. Sheridan. The Speaker wished to state, that there was no rule better established in the house than that, Qui digreditur a materiâ ad personam was disorderly. That whatever wandered from the subject in debate, and is converted into a personal attack, is contrary to order; and in this respect, he could not help regarding the expression of the honorable gentleman, "that these conspiracies had no existence, except in the foul imaginations of ministers, as disorderly. He begged pardon of the house for an omission of his duty in not having called him to order when the expression was made use of. Indeed the connection of the speech of the honorable gentleman with the question, was altogether so very nice, as to require some degree of attention before its drift could be perceived. He, however, thanked the honorable gentleman who had occasioned the interruption; the expressions were certainly disorderly, however they might have arisen from that mode of attack which had been adopted by the honorable gentleman (Mr. Sheridan) in the first instance.

Mr. Sheridan rose——

Mr. Pitt :—Except the honorable gentleman rises for a motion of order, I certainly, as having been already before the house, am entitled to speak. [Here Mr. Sheridan sat down.] I beg leave to say, that I must always bow with deference to any interruption from you, whose regard to the dignity and impartiality in conducting the business of this house is upon every occasion so evident, and whenever interrupted for any expression that might appear disorderly, and may have escaped me in the heat of debate, I most readily make my apology, where alone it is due, to you and to the house.

Mr. Sheridan spoke both to order and explanation. No man could be more inclined to support the decision of the chair than he was; but he conceived he had been misunderstood. The Chancellor of the Exchequer had been convicted of being disorderly, by the immediate decision of the chair; and in making what he called an apology, he attempted to intimate that he excepted the person to whom it was at least equally due in common with the rest of the house. This apology for being disorderly, was itself a manifest breach of order. But while the right honorable gentleman was apologizing for his past behaviour, Mr. Sheridan allowed him most readily to make the distinction; for he should have received his apology with exactly the

same sensations of contempt, with which he had heard the provocation from him without it. He was as ready as any man to bow to the authority of the chair; but in his case, the Speaker had not called him to order at the time. It was the right of every member to state his own conception of order, as well as the Speaker. He had said, the conspiracy originated in the foul imagination of His Majesty's ministers; and he must now say he felt no disposition whatever to retract one syllable; so far from it, he would repeat his words, and his conviction, that these plots and conspiracies had originated in the foul imagination of His Majesty's ministers; and he must insist, that speaking of them as ministers, and not as individuals or members of that house, this language was regular and in order. Whether the sounds were as musical as the ministers would be pleased with hearing, was another question; they certainly were strictly parliamentary; and if it was ever established otherwise, there would be an end of all plainness and freedom of debate. The right honorable gentleman had thought fit to say that the Speaker would not interrupt a speech because it was bad or absurd; there again the Speaker should have called the right honorable gentleman to order; for it was well known the Speaker, in his official capacity, could not tell any member of the house that his speech is disorderly, but bad and absurd. The right honorable gentleman had hinted that a reflection had been cast on the committee of secrecy, and with a cautious magnanimity, he contrived to place himself in the centre of these twenty gentlemen, for the purpose of applying to them all what was intended to apply to himself. Only this was a gross misrepresentation; for he had made no reflection on the committee; but no arrogant mandate of that right honorable gentleman, should deter him from delivering his sentiments freely. He had said the committee were misled—that he understood another

report was to come forth, and if that report should contain matter to criminate individuals, he should wish to see them punished, if guilty, and he should then be ready to retract his opinion; but the report, to produce that conviction, must be composed of very different materials from the other. With respect to the weight of character in that house, and an allusion of the right honorable gentleman, that nothing which fell from some persons could give him pain, he could only say, that when the minister, or any other man, should tax him, in or out of that house, with a single action which he feared to meet or vindicate, he would allow him, without rebuke, to deal in such insinuations, which, by the way, he had indiscriminately applied, at one time or other, to all who opposed his views. He left the house to judge of the manliness of a person who sheltered himself in the shade of his situation. He should take no farther notice now of this part of the conduct of the minister; he dealt in insinuations, which, but for his situation, he durst not make. On such a conduct he should make no comment; because he knew there were expressions of scorn and disdain, which the orders of the house would not permit him to use. He would never ask from the right honorable gentleman an apology for any provocation given within these walls; and he was well convinced, that no provocation would ever be given to him without.

The house divided; for the previous question 208; against it 57.

JUNE 16.

**SUPPLEMENT TO THE SECOND REPORT OF THE
COMMITTEE OF SECRECY.**

Mr. Pitt brought up various papers, by way of supplement to the second report of the committee of secrecy.—They contained a letter from Charles Grey, Esq. member of that house, to the right honor-

able William Pitt, chairman of the secret committee, inclosing a letter signed by Mr. Daniel Stuart, and other papers. The purport of this communication from Mr. Grey to the minister, was to shew that there was no communication between the society of the Friends of the People, of which Mr. Grey is a Member, and that of the convention which was held at Edinburgh, after the proceedings of that convention changed their original appearance; after it called itself the "British Convention," instituted for the purpose of obtaining universal suffrage and annual parliaments, &c. The report of the committee stated the propriety of communicating the whole proceedings to the house; at the same time it observed, that the committee were by no means convinced of their having committed an error in their former report, though such error had been attempted to be pointed out by Mr. Grey.

Mr. SHERIDAN made some observations on this supplement to the report; in the course of which, he maintained that there appeared in the report something like an intention to insinuate that there existed between the society of the Friends of the People, and that of the British convention at Edinburgh, a connection from beginning to end; whereas it appeared that no such connection existed farther, than while that convention professed to have nothing in view but a reform in parliament; this was evident from the whole tenor of the letters of Mr. Stuart, the secretary of the society of the Friends of the people, signed and written by him as a private gentleman, and not in his official capacity, directed to Mr. Skirving at Edinburgh. He observed it was not fair to charge the society with the contents of a letter containing the sentiments of a private person. He complained that a letter, dated the 16th of October, 1793, in which Mr. Stuart stated that he only spoke his private opinions, as neither the society nor committee were sitting, was suppressed in the report, while all his other letters, which the secret committee, by the letter they suppressed, must have known to be only private personal ones, were inserted as the acts of the society. There was, indeed, nothing in any of the letters of which he did not approve; and from his personal knowledge of that gentleman, he should not hesi-

tate to defend, or even be responsible for his opinions; but the omission of this particular letter he must consider as a design to implicate the Friends of the People collectively in those charges which were brought against other societies. If ministers had any doubts on this subject, he wished to know why they did not send for and examine Mr. Stuart; if they had, every doubt on this business would have been cleared up at once. He did not think any part of this business merited much attention, farther than it proved the inattention of the committee who formed the report, in not making the distinction between the formal signature of Mr. Stuart, as secretary to the society, and that of his name as a private gentleman, to a letter expressive of his own sentiments in the absence of the society. From this inaccuracy in the report in one part, he could not think favorably of the whole of it; but he must again say he saw in the letters nothing which any well-wisher to the constitution of this country ought to disavow.

Mr. Sheridan said, that for the honor of the secret committee, ~~he had been~~ in hopes that Mr. Stuart's letter of the 16th of October, had never fallen into their hands; but now it was owned by their chairman, he thought it completely shewed their design of misrepresenting the society of the Friends of the People, by suppressing those papers which might shew their conduct in its true colours, and bringing forward only those which they thought would subject it to censure.

After some debate,

Mr. Sheridan said, as so many mistakes in the report had been detected, the house had a right to disbelieve the whole; and thus the report was of no value. He could not advise Mr. Grey to practise candor, because he could not promise him a return from the committee. This he proved by the implications and insinuations made in their report. For

his part, he could not discover any impropriety in either of Mr. Stuart's letters, nor should he, were they written under his direction, be afraid of any consequences, or ashamed to disavow them. He detected and exposed three untruths in the report, which consisted in the account of the meeting of the society, and the letters written by Mr. Stuart on the 23rd of July, and the 29th of October. He said he was sorry the committee had seen the letter which explained the innocence of the society, because it betrayed the malice or the negligence of the committee; and, therefore, for their honor, he hoped it had never been seen. The suppression of it was certainly remarkable; for if any doubts were entertained of the society's collusion, it would have been but honorable to have examined the secretary. As the secretary, however, was not examined, and these parts of the report were so inaccurate, he had but a bad opinion of the rest of the batch.

The supplement was ordered to be laid on the table and printed.

JUNE 20.

CITY MILITIA BILL.

The house in a committee went through this bill, and made some amendments, and upon the question that it should be engrossed,

Mr. SHERIDAN said, he did not perceive any immediate necessity for hurrying the bill through the house in such a manner, as not even to give the citizens of London time to consider its effects. With regard to the particular clauses of the bill, he thought them highly objectionable, and such as the preamble did not warrant, which carried on the very face of the proceeding, something like deceit:—for it set forth, that there were some defects in the present militia; and in order to remedy such defects, the bill entirely destroyed the ancient constitutional

force of the city. Their present force consisted of : 9000 men, which, if properly managed, would be an effectual protection for the city ; and in the room of this force, it is proposed, there should be substituted two regiments of militia, which were to be under the control of the King, and at the influence of the crown consisting but of 600 men each, which did not appear to him to be any improvement of its military force. He would, therefore, propose, that the farther consideration should be deferred to
* Monday next.

Sir James Saunderson, Sir Watkin Lewis, Alderman Curtis, and Mr. Alderman Anderson supported the bill.

Mr. Sheridan contended, that this bill was nothing less than a bill of pains and penalties on the city of London, for their refusal to concur in the plan of benevolence ; he thought the three worthy aldermen who represented the city, and made so pusillanimous a surrender of its rights, would not have the honor of again being appointed the guardians of its interests in that house, when the true nature and force of the bill came to be understood. He thought this measure one of the most daring which had been brought forward during this session, and was a continuation of the system of ministers to introduce a military government into this country, in place of its natural and constitutional force. He was surprised to hear from the honorable gentleman, that the present military was of no service, nor it never had been ; he had forgot the services they rendered the country in the times of Charles I. particularly at the siege of Gloucester ; the worthy alderman (Sir Watkin Lewes) himself was also a great military commander, and had on a former occasion received thanks for his conduct ; to be sure he could not compare him to Prince Cobourg, or the late King of Prussia ; and it was true, he might want the military air of his honorable friend near him, (Colonel Cawthorne) but he might, neverthe-

less, possess talents sufficient to improve the present force of the city, and not lend his hand to destroy it.

The house divided; ayes 70; noes 12.

THANKS TO ADMIRAL LORD HOOD.

Mr. Dundas moved, "That the thanks of the house be given to Admiral Lord Hood, for his able and gallant services in the reduction of Bastia, in the island of Corsica."

Mr. Sheridan said he was not very hasty in forming his opinions, and therefore not likely to retract them without some reason or argument to convince him they had been founded in error or misconception; but the right honorable gentleman had not stated any ground whatever, upon which he moved for the thanks to the noble admiral, but he supposed the fame of his victories, and the general approbation with which they were received by the public at large, had rendered any statements to the house superfluous, or, perhaps, it might be considered a kind of insult, to enter into a detail of facts so notorious as the splendid and valuable successes of his lordship. But when the thanks of that were to be voted to Lord Howe, the right honorable gentleman felt it incumbent upon him to make some short statement of the services performed by that noble lord, though no man could be a stranger to the fact, that he had rendered his country the most essential services, and made her prouder in her security. With regard to Sir C. Grey and Sir J. Jervis, he had also found it necessary to give some short account of their splendid services, which followed one so quick upon the heels of another, as to astonish the most experienced and sanguine commander; and the value of the conquests made by those gallant officers, were not to be estimated in any other war than the present, in this he could not consider them of such estimation. He sincerely regretted that he had no reason to change his opinion, but he

should feel it necessary to oppose the motion of : thanks to the noble admiral, to whose gallant and able conduct, upon many other occasions, he was ready to bear testimony ; but as thanks were the sole reward which the house had in its power to bestow, and was at the same time the most ample and most honorable reward any man could receive, he thought it fit that due regard should be had, to preserve its value and importance, and not to diminish and fritter it away, by bestowing it upon trifling occasions, or on persons who had not really merited it ; the circumstance of his having received the thanks that night, might be, perhaps, considered as some reason why he should not oppose the same favor being bestowed on another ; but it was to be recollected, he was one of many, appointed to perform a task which they had executed to the extent of their ability—they had gone through their labor and received their reward, which, as long as its value is preserved, by never granting it but on great and necessary occasions, is certainly the greatest and most honorable reward which man can receive—the house had a constant eye over their conduct and behaviour on the occasion, and were competent to judge of their merit or demerit ; but it was something different with regard to admirals and generals employed upon foreign service, whose conduct His Majesty, through his ministers, but to which, except by information also from them, the house could form no judgment whatever. He did not conceive it probable that any such mean, disgraceful principle as envy could actuate the minds of any officers employed in the service ; he did not think it probable that Lord Howe or Sir John Jervis, or Sir Charles Grey, could feel any envy at the thanks of that house being voted to a brother officer ; but, nevertheless, ministers seemed to act upon a principle of that kind, for they seemed to think that Lord Hood might feel something like discontent or jealousy invade his breast, if he did

not receive some token of public approbation as well as those officers who had been deservedly so distinguished, and that such was pretty evident, because that neither on account of the capture of Toulon, nor on account of the memorable retreat from Toulon, of which he should speak something more hereafter—nor on account of the capture of Fiorenzo, did His Majesty's ministers ever once think of voting the thanks to Lord Hood. But now, when the thanks, which was the general voice of the nation, grateful for the most essential services, was voted to Lord Howe, they come with the little cock-boat of Bastia into the wake of Lord Howe's fleet, and under his convoy, wished to steer it into the port of Public Approbation. He observed, that the thanks were merely confined to the capture of Bastia, and no consideration whatever was had to the whole of the conduct of the noble admiral. He had been sent into the Mediterranean with the best appointed fleet that ever sailed from the British shore; he had the assistance of the Spanish fleet, or should have had it, or if he had it not, administration were reprehensible in forming alliances with powers which did not adhere to the terms of the treaties in which they engaged; he had employed a whole year, and had not yet effected his object; for if the reduction of Corsica was his object, it had not been yet effected. He then drew a comparison between the services rendered by Lord Hood and those performed by Lord Howe, Sir Charles Grey, and Sir John Jervis, who had in so short a time performed so much. It had been made, in the thanks to those officers, one ground, the cordiality which subsisted between the naval and military forces; but if he had not been much misinformed, the reverse was the case at Bastia; and he instanced the situation of Colonel Lumsden to prove this point. Seven thousand land forces had arrived to his lordship's assistance, at the time that he was entering into articles of capitulation for the surrender of the place; but this did not

retard the negotiation, and he entered into articles: highly disadvantageous and reprehensible; for he consented to land all the garrison at Toulon, that they might be employed against our ally the King of Sardinia, or assist at the siege of Turin; and we should recollect that we are bound by treaty to, persist in the war, until all that prince's territories shall be restored to him. He supposed the administration wished to draw a veil over the disgraceful actions at Toulon, in which the faith and honor of the British nation received an irreparable stroke through his lordship's conduct. He could not conceive upon what ground the right honorable gentleman could have supposed him to have retracted his opinion upon this subject, when early in the session he had intimated his intention of moving an inquiry into his lordship's conduct on that occasion; he wished the noble lord was in his place, because it was painful to speak to the disadvantage of any gentleman in his absence; besides, it was very possible the noble lord might give such an explanation of his conduct, as would remove every imputation of blame from him. He in strong terms reprobated the offer of the constitution of 1789 to the people of Toulon, and the vain promise of protection given them. It had been said that every one who was willing to go was taken away, when, in fact, the first notice, so great a matter of secrecy was the retreat, these unfortunate persons had, was the blaze of those ships it was found necessary or possible to burn, and then they had their option of running four or five miles, to scramble to get on board, and leaving their wives and families without protection or support, or of awaiting the resentment of their exasperated countrymen. Such was the protection afforded the Toulonese. There was in the whole of the transaction, of Toulon too much negotiating, too much management, neither of which became the character of an English admiral. But the noble lord was not only an admiral, he was a politician.

Mr. Sheridan hoped that he should not be suspected of having any recollection of the Westminster election—(*A great cry of "Hear! hear!"*)—By the way in which that observation was received, he perceived that if he had, other gentlemen had not forgotten that event. It called to his recollection a conversation he had with an honest fellow who was concerned in the Westminster election, who asked him, "What he thought of the business of Toulon?" I told him I thought it was a very extraordinary business. "Yes, Sir," said he, "I think, when he comes back, we ought to have a scrutiny." Upon the whole, though he felt himself bound to oppose this motion, yet he wished to do it in the least disrespectful manner to the noble admiral; therefore he should move the previous question.

Mr. Watson observed that Mr. Sheridan, in adverting to the Westminster election, "let the cat out of the bag." With respect to this business, he said, that he had the honour of an acquaintance with his lordship at that time, whose generosity he applauded, and no insinuation that could be made against him, would lead him to disapprove of those services, for which he would give his most hearty thanks and approbation.

Mr. Sheridan, after remarking on the generosity to which Mr. Serjeant Watson alluded, said, that as gentlemen were so extremely partial to precedents, he was surprised to see them depart from them in the present instance. He would therefore move, by way of amendment, that the thanks of the house should be voted to Admiral Peyton, Gardner, Lieutenant-Colonel Vilette, and each of the officers employed in the land service during the operations against Bastia.

Mr. Pitt said, that there was a strange particularity in the amendment, as it went to overload a motion of thanks for services, which the honorable gentlemen had disputed. Beside Admiral Peyton had been recalled from the Mediterranean before the war, and since waved his flag in the Downs. There was besides another error, as Colonel Vilette had not been engaged in the service.

Mr. Sheridan replied, that he was concerned that there were not more mistakes in the business, as

being more congenial to the proposition. In the case of Lord Hood, the admirals were individually mentioned; but in the present instance, ministers thought fit to deviate from their former practice; they knew that there was a want of harmony and union between the officers employed in the reduction of Bastia. As to the error into which he had fallen, it was such as the First Lord of the Admiralty had made in another house. But he thought Colonel Vilette deserved the thanks of the house, as Bastia had been reduced to starvation; and he was active in his situation, with others, in cutting off the supplies. He was of opinion, however, that it was a duty incumbent on ministers to correct the error, and specify by name the parties concerned.

Mr. Sheridan's amendment was negatived, and the original motion put and carried.

JULY 7.

ADJOURNMENT—STATE OF THE COUNTRY.

Mr. Long moved, "That the house, on its adjournment, should adjourn till Friday next."

Mr. SHERIDAN said, that it might have been expected that in such a situation of the country as the present, ministers would have thought it no derogation from their dignity to attend their duty in the house on the last day of the session in which it was likely any business could be done. There were many points respecting which members of that house were bound to ask for information—information which their constituents in the several parts of the country would have a right to demand of them; and unless the honorable gentleman who had moved to adjourn till Friday, could say that it was not the intention of ministers to prorogue parliament on that day, he should move, as an amendment, to leave out the word Friday and insert Thursday. His reason

for moving this amendment was, in order to have an opportunity of bringing forward a proposition, which, from the late events that had taken place on the Continent, he conceived to be of considerable importance to the country : he therefore moved that the house do adjourn till Thursday next.

Mr. Long agreed to the amendment, "because the honorable gentleman who moved it had an opportunity of counting out the house." Only 20 members were present.

Mr. Sheridan said, it would have been more decent for the honorable gentleman who moved to adjourn till Friday, to give any reason for agreeing to the amendment, rather than confess that attention to the interests of their constituents in the house of commons was only a secondary object in their contemplation. He must persist in the amendment ; and give notice to the few members present, that on Thursday next he should make a motion on the state of the country with respect to the war.

The amendment was put and carried.

JULY 10.

MR. SHERIDAN'S MOTION ON THE STATE OF THE COUNTRY.

Mr. SHERIDAN said, he was extremely happy at the attendance of the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Pitt) in the house this day ; for it afforded an opportunity to have, what some time ago he despaired of having, a few words at parting ; for he had feared that His Majesty's minister had continued in the resolution of treating the house of commons as of less importance for him to attend, than what he might call the pressure of state affairs. He rejoiced also that two alterations had just been made (alluding to the new writs) on account of vacancies made in that house, by the acceptance of certain offices in His Majesty's disposal. They all knew

when gentlemen vacated their places, that others might succeed them ; that this was done for no other purposes, but that these offices might be better executed than they were before. He heard one of the writs moved for with regret ; that for a right honorable gentleman (Mr. Burke) who, for so many years, had sedulously exerted himself in the public service ; but he was happy to understand that the right honorable gentleman was put into an office of profit, suited to his eminent services and abilities. He understood that the minister came to the house to-day, to make a motion for erecting a monument, at the public expense, as a testimony of gratitude to the memory of two brave officers, (Captain Harvey and Captain Hutt) and that, Mr. Sheridan said, he had no doubt would pass unanimously. His motion (he meant that which he should make in the first instance) did not go to that which he was sure was the duty of ministers to advise His Majesty, not to prorogue parliament, although in one event it might be followed up by such a motion ; for nothing, in his opinion, was more necessary at this moment, than that that house, His Majesty's national, constitutional, and best advisers, should continue sitting to deliberate on important public affairs at this awful crisis. But before he should proceed to bring that matter forward in the shape of a motion, he should require of the minister some information on great and important points, and on that would depend much of what he had to say on the prorogation. If the affairs on the continent had been, as they now are, in the months of February or March, or April, he believed there was not one man in that house who would not say that parliament ought to have made some inquiries into them, for they were certainly calamitous in an alarming degree to this country. If events had been at that time as they are now, he would say again, it would not be possible for the minister to pass them over, without giving to the house something in the nature of an

explanation; he must therefore now call for an explanation from those who were the best qualified to give it. Not more than six weeks had elapsed since the object of this war, on the part of our government, was avowed, and whatever might be thought of the prudence, there could not be two opinions on the candor of that avowal; it was stated in express terms to be the extermination of the present government of France; it was added, by way of shewing the sincerity of that declaration, that we ought to employ the last man and the last guinea which this country could spare for that purpose, if necessary; for that at all events, with all risks, under all hazards, we must subdue France, and dictate to them a form of government. At this period, and under all the circumstances of our situation, did he say too much, when he said that to the conviction of every man in that house, and every man in this country, qualified by information to form an opinion upon the subject, that that object was chimerical and impracticable; and now he was sure he had a right, the public had a right, to demand from ministers whether that object was or was not now abandoned. To demand to know, in explicit terms, what was the real object of this war on our part at this moment? This was absolutely necessary for the people of this country; for without it, they could not know what situation they were in, for hitherto they had met with nothing but deception; what conjecture could they form of the future by examining the past? Had there been a hope cherished that had not been entirely disappointed? Had there been one promise made to the people of this country, that had not been completely broken? He would venture to say not one.—Ministers, at the commencement of this dreadful war, had indeed been opposed; but when once engaged in it, they had not been denied a single man or a single guinea for carrying it on. They told the house, and they told the public, they had the most sanguine expectations of

the most desirable success, if proper resources were granted to them. They were not deserted by the house; they had the most ample resources; they applied for a subsidy to the King of Prussia, to an unprecedented, to an enormous amount; they had it. They applied for a long subsidy to the King of Sardinia; they had it. They applied for unlimited power with regard to employing French emigrants in the King's service; they had it.—What had been the consequence of all this?—Defeat, disaster, and disgrace following each other in rapid succession, until we came to the climax of calamity, and whenever inquiry was called for, ministers pressed on the house to abstain from entering into any, alleging it to be a dangerous thing to interrupt the affairs of government; and indeed by their rule, it would seem that they expected the house and the public would give them credit for abilities in future, in proportion as they manifested their incapacity by the past; and that they were entitled to support from the public, in proportion as they continued to delude them;—that they deserved trust in proportion as they betrayed it. They had got a deal of credit in that house, and some with the public, for the wisdom of their plans; now he should be glad to know what they had to say on their favorite plan of marching to Paris. On what ground would they maintain the practicability of that decisive stroke? Did they mean to rely on the assistance of the King of Prussia, a prince stated to have been so fond of military—by the way he should be glad to know whether that prince had actually received any subsidy from this country; and if he had, what services he had rendered?—Whether he had marched any troops to co-operate with ours?—And if he had, what their number was?—What they had done? And where they were now stationed?—What articles of the treaty between him and us the King of Prussia had fulfilled?—Whether he had fulfilled any, except one—the receiving of our money?

These were points, Mr. Sheridan said, the house of commons were bound in duty to inquire into before they separated, and he did not know how they were to face their constituents without knowing something upon these topics. He was one of those who thought that the King of Prussia had not done his duty to this country for the enormous sum of money which we agreed to give him; for if we did pay him for sending his troops to destroy the effect of French principles in Poland, he was one of those who were unable to discover of what use it was to us that the troops of the King of Prussia should be employed in convincing the Poles that they ought to submit to be robbed and plundered. He did not see what the minister was to say upon that subject, or what defence was to be set up. If the minister did not imagine that the King of Prussia would have acted as he has done, the answer was, it was his business to have so imagined, for he was warned of it in the course of the debates on the granting the subsidy, and he might have been taught to expect it from experience of the conduct of that monarch—He was warned also of what might be the conduct of the Emperor and all the allies in this war; what had been predicted on these points had actually happened, and that so clearly and plainly, that to say they were events which might not have been expected, was a subterfuge unworthy of any man who had any value for his character for judgment or integrity. If on the other hand the minister should say, this was not owing to the wilful neglect of the King of Prussia, or to the insincerity of the Emperor or any of the allies, but owing to the prodigious number of the French as an armed nation, there again the minister was without excuse; for he knew the French to have long been an armed nation, for he had stiled them so himself most emphatically, and he must have either wanted judgment to foresee the event that had happened, or precaution to provide an adequate remedy against it.

But taking it for granted that the treaty with the King of Prussia was a wise one on our part, he wished to know why the forces of that prince were not brought to co-operate with ours in Flanders? And why our own were not employed there instead of being employed in holding out false hopes to the poor royalists in France. He did not profess to be any thing of a military man, but he trusted that common sense was of itself sufficient to point out the absurdity of any of the allies in this war employing any of their troops to assist the royalists in France, while their presence was so essentially necessary in Flanders. The effect of this policy was now obvious to every body; we had totally failed of our object in the war. That object, so pompously described by the minister, was now become totally impracticable. Instead of destroying the present government of France, receiving indemnity for the past and security for the future, and forming such a government for France as shall appear to be a proper one, we were now at war for the defence of Holland! In this view on our affairs, he could not think it unreasonable for that house to call on the minister to say explicitly, Whether government still persevere in their declared object of this war? And in asking this question, he observed, that he should have much more satisfaction, if the right honorable gentleman, who was now reposing in the cool shade of the Chiltern hundreds, was present, for it seemed he was to be war minister; but on account of the public he must demand, and he was sure he was intitled to an answer,—What is now the object of the war? The project of destroying the government of France was the most unfortunate, as well as the most foolish, that ever entered into the head of any man; and yet that right honorable gentleman he had hinted at, who was now absent, had said, we must either destroy the government of France or perish in the attempt. This assertion, coupled with the absence of the gentleman

who made it, was, under all the circumstances, an additional reason why parliament should not be prorogued now. As to the manner in which it had been thought proper to unite different persons under one administration, for conducting the present war, Mr. Sheridan was pointedly severe on the inconsistency of the minister and of his new associates, contrasting their present union with the avowed principles held by the whig party, as expressed in the year 1784, and insisted upon in the last session of parliament, that it was inconsistent with the dignity of parliament to countenance the manner in which the present administration had got into power, until some atonement had been made by them for the violation of the principles of the constitution; something of an extraordinary nature, he insisted, must have happened, before such persons could have sacrificed their consistency, and, in his opinion, their honor—either that the present administration was weak, and inadequate to the task they had undertaken; an idea which, whatever the public might think of them in other respects, they would never allow—or that the country was in such a situation as to call for an union of party without any regard to consistency of character—or that the responsibility of proceeding on the present system, ought to be divided between ministers and those who had constantly opposed all their measures. In either of those events he was intitled to call for an explicit declaration of the object of the war, for in any view of it the event conveyed an idea of the desperation of the cause—perhaps indeed he should be told, that the success of the allies had tended to unite the French, but that now their project had failed, the French would again quarrel among themselves—he believed that this idea would meet with nothing but the most severe censure of the public. Most particularly he felt it his duty to press an inquiry as to the situation of this country and the King of Prussia, and that was the first point of what he had to

submit to the house; we had voted a large sum of money to that Prince, and it did not appear that he had done any thing towards performing his part of the engagement; and on that particular account the house was entitled to an explanation, and the public, through their medium, expected to be satisfied in that respect.

With regard to America, he said that there was not any thing more odious than the whole character of the present administration of this country. Every person who had any correspondence from that country knew that to be a fact. It was true there were two parties in America. The one violent and rash, favorers of the principles of the French in their most blameable excess; the other wise and moderate, and willing to sacrifice a great deal for the sake of preserving the blessings of peace; but, all to a man, they censured the character of the present administration. If ministers thought otherwise, they had either been very ill informed, or very inattentive upon that subject. He mentioned, on a former occasion, a paper containing a speech of Lord Dorchester to the Indians; and then the right honorable Secretary of State had been pleased to treat it as a forgery: yet this turned out to be authentic. Now he wanted to know whether this was avowed by ministers, and if it was agreeable to the direction which they gave to that noble lord, and what was now intended to be done in consequence of it? If ministers should say this was a point on which they could not give any satisfaction, he should not press it any farther; but he thought it his duty to mention it, that the ministers might avail themselves, if they thought fit, of an opportunity of satisfying the public upon that very important subject. Perhaps, indeed, the Americans relied on the character of the administration of this country; having witnessed the petty, miserable, annual expedients they had adopted, thought they would retract any thing they had advanced, and

for that purpose had given Mr. Jay full power and distinct directions to negotiate; but as nothing that could be done by administration, could possibly satisfy the Americans without the express recognition of parliament, he thought that of itself a very good reason why parliament should not at this time be prorogued. Upon this head he should only submit to the minister the propriety of his giving some satisfaction to the public. If the minister should be inclined to give the house any information with respect to America; if he was inclined to give any explanation with regard to, and the subsequent conduct of, the King of Prussia, if he was willing to give the house, in short, any explanation with regard to the present war, as to the present object of government in carrying it on, or to afford the public any light on our present situation, then, Mr. Sheridan said, he should follow up his first motion, with another, to address His Majesty not to prorogue parliament until an opportunity should be had of receiving such information; but if, on the contrary, no such information was to be given, the subsequent motions would be useless, and, therefore, he should not attempt to make them. On looking at the conduct of the King of Prussia, he observed, it was impossible not to advert to the conduct of all our allies, particularly on the point of faith in the punctual observance of engagements. We were told that we could not propose any terms of peace with the French, because they have not a government to be depended upon. It was not their want of morality or religion, but their want of a regular government, that was our objection to treating with them. What was this but an insolent mockery to the common sense of mankind? What has been done to prove the good faith of the King of Prussia to be depended upon? What has been done by the Emperor to prove that he was to be depended upon? What has been done by the King of Sardinia to prove that he was to be depended upon? What has been

done by the King of Spain to be depended upon? What has been done by the Empress of Russia to prove that she was to be depended upon? In short, what, he would ask, had been done by any of our allies, separately taken, or all of them jointly, that was to be depended upon? And how were the people of this country to be the dupes of all the other powers in Europe, in this mad crusade?—Here Mr. Sheridan entered into a detail of various particulars of affairs on the continent, and in the Mediterranean, and maintained that the only power in Europe which had been faithful to its promise, was that of France, which, although he blamed its excesses, he was bound to confess had been punctually observant of its promise. It had promised to drive its enemies, and it had done so. It had avowed an enmity with the despots of Europe, and manifested its sincerity by the most tremendous exertions. Why, therefore, was France to be called the only power in Europe, on whose promise no reliance could be placed? Only because it was the only power in Europe that had been faithful to its promise! He wished to hear no more of this style of insolence to the public; indeed, he had some hopes that the high characters who had now with so much sacrifice to their consistency, and he must still insist, with so much sacrifice to their honor, taken an active share in administration, would reflect on the situation they are in, and remember that now they partake of the responsibility attached to the conduct of this war; a war which one of them, who is now to be a war minister, had described to be, “*Bellum usque ad internecionem.*”—He had hopes, he said, that they would reflect on their situation, and on the situation of this country, and exert their efforts to put an end to this insane system. He hoped they would reflect on the warning given to them by his right honorable friend. But if, deriding all demonstration and experience,

this ruinous and mad crusade was really to be persevered in; if this infatuated administration had gained nothing by their new alliance but an additional infusion of rashness and obstinacy; he was confident the hour was not far off when the duped and deluded people of this country would lose at once their credulity and their patience, when a solemn hour of account would come; an hour which their having seduced others to share the peril of, would neither ward off nor protract, when the eyes, the hopes, the hearts of the nation would be turned to one man, to his right honorable friend, whom he spoke of more willingly in his absence (Mr. Fox was not in the house), a man in whose mind, however its generous nature might be wounded by a separation from long-formed and dearly-cherished connections, he was confident, there would ever be found a paramount attachment to the safety, the prosperity, and independence of his country, and to the liberty and happiness of man in general; a man who, at this very moment, he believed, did not to the public eye appear less for being more alone; on the contrary, who seemed to stand on higher ground from being less surrounded. To him, in the stormy hour, the nation would turn, and they would find him,

“ Like a great sea-mark, standing ev’ry flow,
And saving those that eye him.”

Mr. Sheridan observed, that in all points in which he could view our present situation, he saw abundant reason for parliament entering into an examination of it, and coming to some determination for the satisfaction of the public. He concluded with moving,

“ That there be laid before the house, an account of monies issued to, and received, by the King of Prussia, in pursuance of the treaty concluded between His Majesty and the King of Prussia, signed at the Hague, the 19th of April, 1794, together with

an account of the troops which have been employed in concert with His Majesty's troops, in pursuance of the same treaty."

Mr. Grey supported and Mr. Pitt opposed the motion.

Mr. Sheridan, in reply, expressed his thanks to Mr. Pitt, for having explicitly avowed that the object of the war was the destruction of the government of France; at the same time he deeply lamented this determination of ministers. Had not the experience of two campaigns shewn them the impracticability of the attempt? Would not the disgraces and disasters we have suffered, within the last six weeks, convince every man of the dangerous situation into which the country had been plunged by the rash measures of administration proceeding on this principle, that we had no security for peace, in treating with the present government of France, which, in fact, was the only government that had kept its faith, not indeed with their allies, for France had none, but the rulers of France had pledged themselves to the people that they would re-conquer Toulon, and they kept their word: they had promised to invade Flanders, and they had totally overrun it; so that it should seem, that the republican government of France was the only one in Europe which appeared to be true to its engagements; for, had not the King of Prussia basely violated his engagements to this country? Was it not the fact, that instead of sending the troops for which he had been paid by us, and which were to have co-operated with the British in Flanders (who, in consequence of his breach of faith), had been exposed to a situation in which their valour was unavailing; that he had employed them for the detestable purpose of plundering and murdering the distressed Poles, in conjunction with the Empress of Russia, who had likewise failed in performing her engagements; for she had not furnished a man nor a rouble towards the object of the war, although

we had stipulated not to make peace without her concurrence. At the time that the British fleet, with inferior force, for which ministers deserved reprobation, were gloriously combating the enemy, had not the Spaniards refused to send out a fleet to capture, or to make the attempt on the American fleet, which the French regarded as their grand resource, the sailing of which for France, had been previously known almost for the space of a year. Was it not true that the Dutch, who were so proudly styled one of the great maritime powers, had not a single ship of the line at sea to assist us. The Emperor had failed in his engagement of keeping up the number of troops he promised, as had the King of Sardinia. This country had also violated its faith to the Toulonese, by infringing the terms on which they had surrendered their town; and also with regard to the hopes held out to the royalists in Normandy of assistance from us, when we had contented ourselves with keeping a body of troops on the coast of Hampshire. Thus it appeared, that the French government was the only one that appeared to have no privilege to break its faith, which all the allies had done as they found occasion. It appeared to him, that ministers had a patent for mis-stating facts. On a former occasion, the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Pitt) had, with that pompous declamation which he could assume when it answered his purpose, descanted on the great importance of the Netherlands to the general cause; but now that the French had possession of these provinces, the language of that gentleman was, that we ought not to be discouraged at a trifling check, or any accidental advantage gained by the enemy. He always had a high idea of the courage of that honorable gentleman; he was so valiant that he would by no means be qualified to defend a fortification, for he would not be able to confine himself within the ramparts. He said the right honorable gentleman had so particularly alluded to his par-

liamentary conduct, and the opposition he always gave to the measures of government, that he thanked the right honorable gentleman for giving him that opportunity of replying to this charge, which he was pleased to bring against him. He had no hesitation in denying the fact, and he defied the right honorable gentleman to point out an instance of his opposing any measure of government which was actually necessary, or had obtained the sanction and approbation of parliament. Upon such occasions, he might ask the right honorable gentleman if he had ever opposed the supplies for carrying into execution the necessary operations which had been approved by parliament. The system and object of the war, and the conduct in carrying it on, was what he had opposed, because he saw it was absurd, erroneous, and destructive to the country; and, upon all occasions where he had opposed, he had fairly and candidly stated his reasons for opposition, which the right honorable gentleman glossed over by a general charge of his having uniformly opposed every measure suggested by government, for a prosecution of the war. The right honorable gentleman had instanced the opposition he had given to the Prussian subsidy, the subscriptions, and the French emigrant bill. As to the Prussian subsidy, it was rather unfortunate for the right honorable gentleman's attack, that he had opposed it on the ground that no dependance could be placed on his Prussian Majesty, and that he had warned ministers of the probability of the troops bargained for being employed against the Poles, instead of the French, but he had voted for the money being raised; his only objection was to the mode of expenditure, and the event justified his conduct. In like manner, when he opposed the measure of subscriptions, it was on constitutional grounds; but he had expressly said that he had no objection thereto, when it should have received the sanction of parliament. The French emigrant bill he opposed on the ground of

its impracticability, for he could not think it possible for ministers to send into France these unfortunate men, who were certain of being executed if taken by their countrymen; and it appeared, that notwithstanding the pompous declaration of the Secretary of State (Mr. Dundas), that he expected five hundred thousand emigrants would be embodied; one hundred were not in arms. On the subject of the Prussian troops, the right honorable gentleman (Mr. Pitt) had enveloped himself in mystery. The terms of the treaty with his Prussian Majesty were, that by the 24th of May last they were to have been at the place of their destination, to co-operate with the British: this place must, of course, be Flanders; but now it seems it is a state secret where those troops are, or rather a secret to all the world. He had always opposed the doctrine of placing confidence in ministers; and, on a former occasion, he had been supported in his opinion by Mr. Windham, whose absence he regretted on this occasion, as he would have expected his coincidence as formerly, on this important point, that no minister had a right to infer, that there existed a spirit of disaffection in those who would not give implicit confidence to government in any means which they chose to adopt in carrying their measures into effect. He trusted, that when the gentlemen who were coming into administration should have considered the state of responsibility in which they were to stand, they would relax somewhat with regard to the extremity to which Mr. Pitt had said the war was to be carried, that we must exterminate the French; for, however, the right honorable gentleman might quibble in his expressions, such was certainly the precise meaning of them. It had not appeared that the French had asked us to interfere in their concerns, as they seemed well satisfied with their present government; we had no right to interfere with it. He lamented the dereliction of principle in the Duke of Portland and Mr. Wind-

ham, who had uniformly declared that they could not act with the present administration, on account of the manner they had come into office, in contempt of the house of commons, and the measures they afterwards pursued. As the day of account must at length arrive, he trusted these gentlemen would consider the perilous situation in which they stood in uniting themselves with Mr. Pitt, and adopt timely measures for the restoration of peace, before it should be too late, while we possessed the means of making it on equitable terms. His object was unequivocally to acknowledge the French republic.

He was persuaded, with his friend (Mr. Grey), that we should be compelled to do as we had done in the case of the American war; it was then objected that we could not treat with the infamous congress, but eventually we were obliged to submit to this humiliation. Now it was said we cannot treat with the government of France, which yet we must certainly do in the end, for it cannot be supposed that we are to carry on war while there is a man or a guinea in the country. The right honorable gentleman had objected to his using the word despot, as one adopted by the members of the French convention; but no insinuation of that kind should have any effect on him: if, by the word monarch was meant the first magistrate of any well-governed state, he would not apply it to the despot of Petersburg, or the despot of Berlin, who had been guilty of such an atrocious breach of faith, such plunder and murder in Poland; for, in speaking of such nefarious actions, he could not be very nice in the selection of his words. The right honorable gentleman, in speaking of these our worthy allies, had used the phrase "regular governments," not a very elegant one, in his opinion; he had, however, no objection to the use of it, and thought that the French were as much entitled to it as any other, if we were to judge from the regularity and discipline of their armies, by which they had conquered the

most renowned troops in the world. France had at least been consistent in her threats and promises; we had felt that all she had said or promised to do against her enemies she had done, and that all we and our allies had promised to one another was still undone. With regard to the object of the war, he was extremely happy that he had brought on this discussion, because it had drawn from the right honorable gentleman an explicit declaration of his precise views; how satisfactory and gratifying it would be to the country to know what these views were, was another question. He had no doubt the honorable gentleman would persist in his opinions and measures: the proceedings of that day evinced his usual obstinacy. Indeed, he should not expect him to retract; he knew well the loftiness of his tones, even when manifestly wrong, and his dislike to make apology for the absurdity of his conduct. The day, however, would soon come when his conduct and his views would appear to the country equally disgraceful, resulting from a degree of vanity and rashness, bordering, in his opinion, upon insanity.

The question was put and negatived without a division.

DECEMBER 30.

CLANDESTINE OUTLAWRY BILL.

The speaker was proceeding to read this bill, for the purpose of opening the business of the session, when

Mr. SHERIDAN rose, and said, he was sorry to present himself to the chair at this moment, but particular circumstances made it absolutely necessary. He was compelled at that moment to state some objections to a proceeding which had usually passed without any observation—he meant the question which was now before the house, Whether the bill to prevent clandestine outlawries be now

read? He objected to putting that question, upon this ground—it had been the uniform practice of the house to read that bill on the opening of every session of parliament, before they proceeded to take His Majesty's speech into consideration; this he understood to be a custom for the purpose of expressing the right of the house of commons to proceed to any business previous to taking into consideration the speech from the throne. He thought this right not an useless, barren trifle, but a right to be insisted upon whenever an occasion should occur for any practical good purpose. He conceived the opportunity was now come for asserting that right, and this he did for enforcing the principle in the strongest manner possible. With that view he must object in form to the reading of the bill now proposed to be read, in order to introduce a motion upon another subject. We were now called upon seriously to advise His Majesty, in a time the most extraordinary, in a situation the most critical and alarming, upon a subject of the utmost importance to this country at large, as well as to every member of that house; and, before they could say they were in a proper situation to give fit advice to His Majesty, in a free, fair, and impartial manner, it was essentially necessary they should themselves be free, which could not, with any color of reason, be said to be the case while the Habeas Corpus act remained suspended. His object, therefore, was, after this question was negatived, to move for leave to bring in a bill to repeal the act of the last session of parliament, which suspended the Habeas Corpus act. He was confident there could be no objection from ministers to this mode of proceeding, unless they would assert, that there does exist, at this moment, the same paramount necessity as that on which they grounded the suspension of the Habeas Corpus act, thereby depriving every Englishman of a right which is most dear to him. If he was told, that the bill which he now wished to repeal had but

a very short time to run ; or if he should be told it was intended to be renewed, he would answer, that he would not suffer such a bill to die a natural death ; that he would not wait a month, a week, a day, or a single moment, after the meeting of parliament, without calling on that house to act as independent, honorable, and free agents for the public, but would defend those rights of the people which had been invaded by ministers ; rights, which the people, if fairly left to the exercise of them, would never abuse. He concluded with saying, that, unless the house should testify a disinclination to the measure, he should move for leave to bring in a bill, to repeal the act of the last session of parliament for suspending the Habeas Corpus act.

After some debate,

Mr. Sheridan rose again, and replied shortly to all the observations which had been made on his proposed motion. He said that the bill, the reading of which he opposed, was a bill for preventing clandestine outlawries. He had no objection to such a bill ; but what he chiefly had in view was to prevent a bill for the clandestine outlawry of the Habeas Corpus act, and the best securities for the lives and liberties of the people. When the right honorable gentleman spoke of the suspension having been voted on solemn deliberation, he was not in the highest form of memory, for it was hurried through the house with unprecedented precipitation, in only two days, and without even the formality of a previous notice. By the trials for treason, and the declaration of a learned gentleman, it appeared that there were at least two culprits, viz. the Attorney and Solicitor General, who had either prosecuted persons who were not engaged in the supposed conspiracy, or neglected to bring forward the evidence to convict them, although they were in possession of such evidence. He was under no necessity of persisting in his motion now ; he could make it at

any time he pleased. He had hinted already, that if the house did not wish to hear it now, he would not now persist in it. The time would soon come when the subject should be seriously discussed. He took therefore this opportunity of giving notice, that as every word he had heard from the other side of the house had confirmed him in his opinion, that the suspension of the Habeas Corpus act was intended to be renewed, he should take the earliest day he could to bring forward the discussion. He was determined to allow no time to concert plans for exciting alarm; no time to make fresh false accusations; no time to marshal and arrange spies; but to call at once upon the ministers for their reasons for continuing to deprive the people of this country of their dearest rights, after every honest man was convinced that the whole story of plots and conspiracies was nothing but a wicked fabrication. He then took notice of the observations of Mr. Serjeant Adair, as to the right a member of parliament had in that house to revise the opinion of a jury. He differed entirely from the learned Serjeant, for he thought that house was the last place in England in which such a subject should be arraigned. He took notice also of the observation of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, of the grand jury having found the bill against the persons who were tried for high treason. That right honorable gentleman had forgotten to take notice that a Secret Committee in that and in the other house of parliament, had previously found their bills upon the very same subjects by their reports. This, amongst others, was a very strong reason why that house should be very cautious in saying or doing any thing that might tend to counteract the impression, which the verdicts of acquittal had justly made on the public mind; because it would appear by their second interference in this extra-judicial proceeding, as if they were endeavouring to support their own former decision, against the honest opinion of mankind in

general. He observed also, that now the charge of high treason, or treasonable conspiracy, was given up, even by the minister himself; but for the purpose of continuing the suspension of the Habeas Corpus act, he might find it serviceable to his views to allege there existed a species of minor conspiracy; and it ought to be remembered, that if this minor conspiracy only had been alleged originally, the minister would not have been empowered by law to seize the papers of the accused party; for nothing short of a positive charge of high treason could have justified that step. He concluded with giving notice, that he should to-morrow name the earliest day possible for the discussion of this important subject.

The bill for preventing Clandestine Outlawries was then read.]

THIRD SECRETARY OF STATE.

Mr. Sheridan said he was sorry to interrupt the business of the day a second time; but what he had now to state was an important point of order. He thought he saw an illustrious stranger (Mr. Dundas) in the body of the house, to whom, whatever might be his merits, to pay any greater degree of attention than to other strangers, was irregular. By Mr. Burke's bill, which abolished the office of Third Secretary of State, and enacted, that if His Majesty, at any future period, should think proper to revive the office, the person appointed to it, if a member to the house of commons, should vacate his seat, he apprehended the right honorable gentleman was no longer a member. Lord Grenville, they all knew, was Secretary of State for the Foreign Department; and he wished to know whether the Duke of Portland and the right honorable gentleman was one Secretary of State, or two Secretaries of State; because if they were two, he conceived that the right honorable gentleman, from the nature of his office, must be the Third Secretary of State.

Mr. Pitt replied, and accused Mr. Sheridan of a want of candour towards Mr. Dundas, in endeavoring, as he had done on the former discussion, to inveigle and entrap him into a delivery of his sentiments in that house, and immediately to found on that circumstance an accusation which would subject Mr. Dundas to a penalty of 500l.

Mr. Sheridan said, it was extraordinary that an attack should be made on him for want of candour, accompanied by an accusation of an attempt to inveigle and entrap the honest simplicity and innocence of the right honorable Secretary, in order to make him pay the sum of 500*l.*; if this had been so, he, however, thought Mr. Dundas fully able to pay such a sum out of the emoluments of his places, which certainly were not inconsiderable. According to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Duke of Portland was the nominal third Secretary of State: a more respectful mode of mentioning his ministerial office might have been adopted by his new friends. What confirmed him in the opinion that Mr. Dundas must be the third Secretary of State was, the right honorable gentleman's declaration, on a former occasion, that he had accepted the office he then held merely as a temporary accommodation to His Majesty's service, and that he never went to bed at night, or rose in the morning, without feeling that he had undertaken more business than he was able to perform. In consequence, he thought the great political Alcides had been called in from Burlington House, *ut quiescat Atlas*. It was lamentable to see an act, which was one of the many that did honor to the political character of its author, violated in the spirit, if not in the letter, by those who had been the loudest in its praise. Calling the Duke of Portland the third Secretary of State, was a mere juggle to evade the act; and the old ominous seals held by Lord George Germaine, more particularly ominous from the similarity of circumstances, were rummaged out. Great as his respect for that nobleman was, he should always lament

that he had condescended to take them into his possession.

After some further conversation this subject was dropped.

ADDRESS ON THE KING'S SPEECH.

His Majesty opened the session with the following speech to both houses.

My Lords and Gentlemen,

After the uniform experience which I have had of your zealous regard for the interests of my people, it is a great satisfaction to me to recur to your advice and assistance, at a period which calls for the full exertion of your energy and wisdom. Notwithstanding the disappointments and reverses which we have experienced in the course of the last campaign, I retain a firm conviction of the necessity of persisting in a vigorous prosecution of the just and necessary war in which we are engaged. You will, I am confident, agree with me, that it is only from firmness and perseverance that we can hope for the restoration of peace on safe and honourable grounds, and for the preservation and permanent security of our dearest interests. In considering the situation of our enemies, you will not fail to observe, that the efforts which have led to their successes, and the unexampled means by which alone those efforts could have been supported, have produced among themselves the pernicious effects which were to be expected; and that every thing which was passed in the interior of the country, has shewn the progressive and rapid decay of their resources, and the instability of every part of that violence and unnatural system, which is equally ruinous to France and incompatible with the tranquillity of other nations. The States General of the United Provinces have nevertheless been led, by a sense of present difficulties, to enter into negotiations for peace with the party now prevailing in that unhappy country. No established Government or independent State can, under the present circumstances, derive real security from such negotiations: on our part, they could not be attempted, without sacrificing both our honor and safety to an enemy whose chief animosity is directed against these kingdoms. I have great pleasure in informing you, that I have concluded a treaty of amity, commerce and navigation, with the United States of America, in which, it has been my object to remove, as far as possible, all grounds of jealousy and misunderstanding, and to improve an intercourse beneficial to both countries. As soon as the ratifications shall have been exchanged, I will direct a copy of this treaty to be laid before you, in order that you may consider of the propriety of making such provisions as may appear necessary for carrying it into effect. I have the greatest satisfaction in announcing to you the happy event of the conclusion of a treaty for the marriage of my son the Prince of Wales with the Princess Caroline, daughter of the Duke of Brunswick; the constant proofs of your affection for my person and family, persuade me, that you will participate in the

sentiments I feel on an occasion so interesting to my domestic happiness, and that you will enable me to make provision for such an establishment, as you may think suitable to the rank and dignity of the heir apparent to the crown of these kingdoms.

Gentlemen of the House of Commons,

The considerations which prove the necessity of a vigorous prosecution of the war, will, I doubt not, induce you to make a timely and ample provision for the several branches of the public service, the estimates for which I have directed to be laid before you. While I regret the necessity of large additional burdens on my subjects, it is a just consolation and satisfaction to me to observe the state of our credit, commerce, and resources, which is the natural result of the continued exertions of industry, under the protection of a free and well-regulated government.

My Lords, and Gentlemen,

A just sense of the blessings now so long enjoyed by this country, will, I am persuaded, encourage you to make every effort, which can enable you to transmit those blessings unimpaired to your posterity. I entertain a confident hope, that under the protection of providence, and with constancy and perseverance on our part, the principles of social order, morality, and religion, will ultimately be successful; and that my faithful people will find their present exertions and sacrifices rewarded by the secure and permanent enjoyment of tranquillity at home, and by the deliverance of Europe from the greatest danger with which it has been threatened since the establishment of civilized society.

The address was moved by Sir Francis Knatchbull, and seconded by Mr. Canning. Mr. Wilberforce objected to it, as pledging the house to carry on the war till a counter revolution was effected in France, and moved as an amendment,—“ To assure His Majesty, that they are determined to grant the most liberal supplies, for the purpose of enabling His Majesty to act with vigour and effect in supporting the dignity of his crown, the internal security of his dominions, and the good faith towards His Majesty’s allies, for which this country has been so eminently distinguished; and that notwithstanding the disappointments and reverses of the last campaign, they are firmly convinced that from the unremitting exertions of His Majesty, and the spirit and zeal which have been so generally manifested throughout the kingdom, by a people sensible of the advantages they enjoy under His Majesty’s government, they may promise themselves (by the blessing of providence) complete security from the attempts of foreign or domestic enemies. That at the same time they beg leave most humbly to represent to His Majesty, that upon full consideration of all the events and circumstances of the present war, and of some transactions which have lately passed in France, and also of the negotiation entered into by the States General, they think it advisable and expedient to endeavour to restore the blessings of peace to His Majesty’s subjects, and to his allies, upon just and rea-

sonable terms. But that if, contrary to the ardent wishes of his faithful commons, such endeavors on the part of His Majesty should be rendered ineffectual by the violence and ambition of the enemy, they are persuaded that the burdens and evils of a just and necessary war, will be borne with cheerfulness by a royal, affectionate, and united people."

A long debate ensued; at the close of which,

Mr. Sheridan would not trouble the house at that late hour on the general topic of the debate. He had attempted twice to be heard, as he was very desirous of delivering his sentiments on the important question before the house, but the last time it had been judged most proper by the house, to prefer hearing the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on account of his indisposition. He would, therefore, at present only remark, that if Lord Chatham had been so very able a minister, it was highly improper to remove him; but he thought it a public misfortune that no inquiry was instituted into his conduct, which, he was convinced, would be proved to be very different from what Mr. Dundas had represented it; and, had he continued in office much longer, he had good grounds for believing a petition would have soon been presented to the King, from the commercial men in the city of London, for his removal. Certain it was, his lordship had felt the necessity of his retreat, as on a late meeting, where it was proposed whether he should be invited or not, on a division he could obtain but a single affirmation.

The house divided; for the amendment 75; against it 204.

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.